PlayStation 3 · PlayStation Portable · PlayStation Network · PlayStation 2

PlayStation®

FEBRUARY 2010

The Official Magazine

PlayStation – The Official Magazine Issue 29 (February 2010)

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

GRAN TURISMO 5

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HANDS-ON
BioShock 2
Battlefield: Bad Company 2
ModNation Racers

STOP SUCKING
Essential tactics for Modern Warfare 2

HUGE REVIEWS
Bayonetta • Darksiders
Army of Two: The 40th Day

GAMES OF THE YEAR
Big winners, bigger surprises!
(13 awards, 1,346,572 hours of gaming, 2 very sore thumbs)

Future MEDIA WITH PASSION

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The Best Is Yet to Come

Just as we were putting the finishing touches on the final batch of pages and sending them off to the printer, I was struck with a paralyzing fear. And no, it wasn't a worry over a wrong score (although Roger keeps insisting I should've given *Bayonetta* five stars), or a misplaced screenshot, or a run-on sentence. It was a concern that ran deeper than anything I've faced in years…

How can we possibly top this issue?

Lest you think I'm bragging, I'm not talking about the pages themselves—though I'm really proud of what our team pulled off yet again, and I can't wait to hear your reactions to this issue. What I'm getting at is the quality of the games we're covering. *Gran Turismo 5*. *Bayonetta*. *Modern Warfare 2*. *BioShock 2*. All 13 games that won our coveted awards. And those are just the big guys.

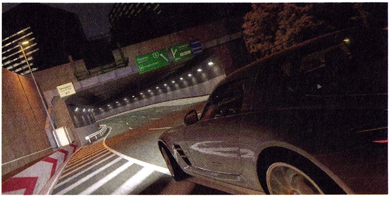
I'm not the first to say this, and I won't be the last: 2010 is shaping up to be the year of the PS3. Our favorite system has some incredible momentum coming out of 2009, thanks to a killer lineup of games, a fabulous hardware redesign, and smart integration with the PSP. It's no wonder the PS3 sold so many units this past holiday season.

And now, looking ahead, it's gonna get even better. Just in the first half of this year alone, we'll be treated to huge first-party exclusives like *Heavy Rain*, *God of War III,* and this month's cover star, *GT5*. If that's not reason enough to be a proud PS3 owner, I don't know what is.

Now I just need to figure out how to cram all that goodness into the next issue, making it even better than this one. It's a problem—no, a *challenge*—that I can't wait to tackle.

GARY

Gary Steinman | Editor in Chief
www.twitter.com/TinyManRages



The Team

GARY STEINMAN
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Is it love? Perhaps. But when the new boss talks about "pleasure in the pain that *Bayonetta* brought us" (p.71), the rest of the staff just stares blankly, retreating to the warm safety of their happy places. Wusses.

NOW PLAYING: *Bayonetta, inFamous, PixelJunk Shooter, Borderlands*

ROGER BURCHILL
MANAGING EDITOR

By day, Roger battles the dark forces of blown deadlines and incorrect syntax. At night, he confronts the machinations of his aspiring ninja-assassin children—with only his superior gaming reflexes to keep him alive.

NOW PLAYING: *Tony Hawk RIDE, God of War Collection*

KEN BOUSQUET
ART DIRECTOR

Some see with their eyes. Others see with their hands. Ken sees all through every sense available, and expresses his extraordinary vision on each and every page in this magazine. Oh, and he plays soccer. A lot of soccer.

NOW PLAYING: *Pro Evolution Soccer 2010, FIFA 10*

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Scott could not be reached for a bio because he was busy hiding in his happy place after Gary made a few troubling comments regarding hair and boss battles. He might be back next issue...maybe.

NOW PLAYING: *Borderlands, BioShock 2, Rock Band 2*

DAVID MURPHY
INTERN WITH THE MOSTEST

He came into our lives with a quiet forcefulness that required us to sit up straight and pay attention again to all things bold and beautiful. We call him Lincoln, and not just because he's tall. Well, *maybe* just because he's tall...

NOW PLAYING: *Mega Man Legends, Omega Boost, Final Fantasy IX*

MIKAL REPARAZ
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

GamesRadar's Mikel took a break from his hectic schedule of recording filthy podcasts and writing 2,000-word love letters to *Jaws Unleashed* to review *Darksiders,* described as "a beautifully realized hellscape." (p.74)

NOW PLAYING: *Darksiders, The Saboteur, Demon's Souls*

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The Official Magazine

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Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).

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CUSTOMER SERVICE: PlayStation: The Official Magazine Customer Care, PO Box 5154, Harlan, IA 51593-0654. Phone: 1-800-477-0484. Web: www.playstationthemagazine.com/customerservice. Email: playstation@cdsfulfillment.com. Back issues can be purchased by calling 1-800-865-7240. REPRINTS: Reprint Management Service. Phone: 717-399-1900 x.100.

ISSN: 1941-5303
PlayStation: The Official Magazine is published 13 times a year, monthly plus Holiday issue following December issue. Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Phone: (650) 872-1642. Fax (650) 872-2207. Website: www.futureus.com. Periodicals postage paid in South San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by Time Warner Retail. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (13 issues): $20.00 U.S., $34.00 Canada. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST #128220688). $44.00 Foreign. Prepaid in US funds only. Subscriptions do not include newsstand-only specials. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to PlayStation: The Official Magazine, P.O. Box 5154, Harlan, IA 51593-0654. PMA #40612608. Produced in the U.S.A. Ride-along Enclosure: None. Standard Mail enclosure: None. Returns: Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, Canada. Future US publishes Guitar World, Mac I Life, Maximum PC, Nintendo Power, Pregnancy, Revolver, Windows: The Official Magazine, The Official Xbox Magazine, and others.

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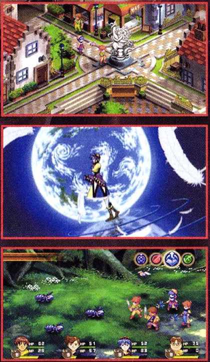

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THE TEN

Stories that everyone's talking about

New Contenders
Six down, two Street Fighters to go.
➔ Page 8

The Nitty Gritty
All you need to know about 2K's new shooter.
➔ Page 10

PSParty
Just reach out and...play your PSP games online.
➔ Page 12

Major Suckage
Don't embarass yourself in the line of *Duty*.
➔ Page 14

Boss Battle
An epic showdown on a very big topic.
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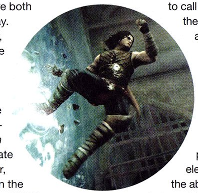
Royal Return

Meet the new Prince of Persia, who happens to be the...old Prince of Persia

1

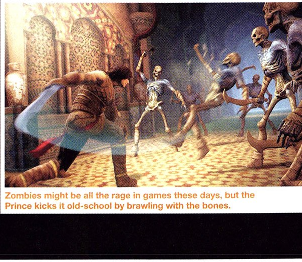
First things first: This is not Jake Gyllenhaal—but the star of Ubisoft's newlyannounced *Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands* does share something in common with the movie actor. They're both in projects based on the PS2 *Sands of Time* trilogy, and they're both coming out in May.



But to be clear, this is *not* a movie game. The Jerry Bruckheimer *Sands of Time* film might feature the same character, but *Forgotten Sands* is a separate project altogether, one that'd been in the works even before 2008's *Prince of Persia* game came out. So, we've heard, it's also not a make-good or redo of the first PS3 *PoP* release—which we at PTOM happened to adore, but we also know it didn't attain the kind of commercial success Ubisoft was hoping for.

So what exactly is *Forgotten Sands?* Set between the events of the first and second games in the *Sands of Time* trilogy, *Forgotten* once again begins with a siege on the palace, causing our royal rapscallion to call forth the power of the sand in a desperate bid to save the kingdom. Familiar territory, but we're promised new powers over nature. Judging from these screens, that'll probably involve elemental forces like the ability to turn water to ice, which might then be used as an acrobatic element in the massive levels.

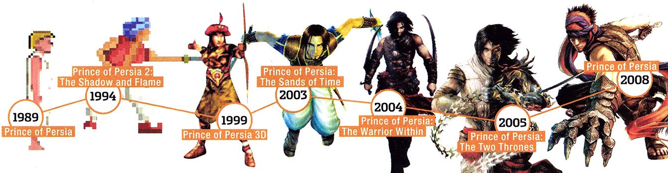
So welcome back, Prince. Though we enjoyed your more "illustrative" predecessor, we're delighted to see you back in the spotlight.



Zombies might be all the rage in games these days, but the Prince kicks it old-school by brawling with the bones.

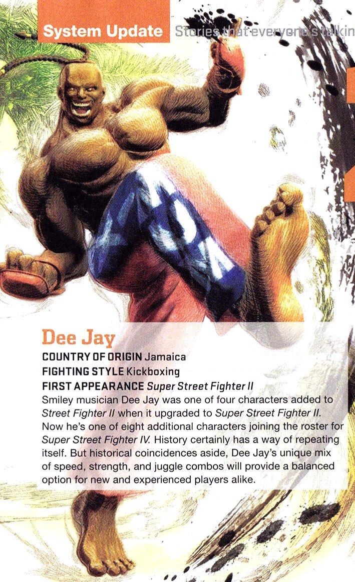
Evolution of a Prince

From humble pixelated roots to a moody middle period, culminating in a lighthearted illustrative phase, the Prince has come a long way.


1989
Prince of Persia
1994
Prince of Persia 2: The Shadow and Flame
1999
Prince of Persia 3D
2003
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time
2004
Prince of Persia: The Warrior Within
2005
Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones
2008
Prince of Persia

2 Super Sized

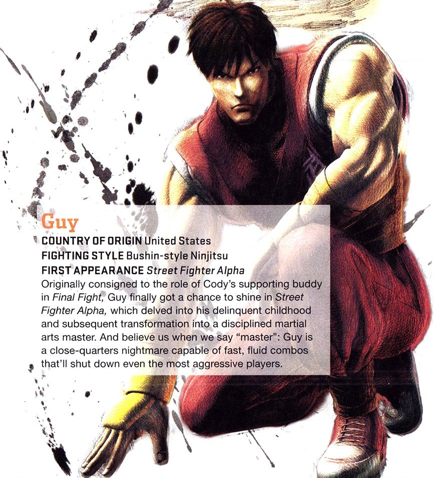
Meet the new combatants coming to *Super Street Fighter IV*



Dee Jay

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Jamaica
FIGHTING STYLE Kickboxing
FIRST APPEARANCE *Super Street Fighter II*

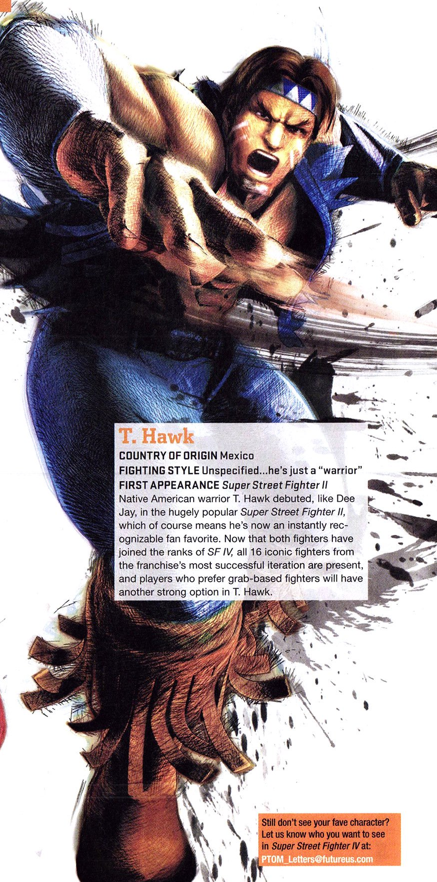
Smiley musician Dee Jay was one of four characters added to *Street Fighter II* when it upgraded to *Super Street Fighter II.* Now he's one of eight additional characters joining the roster for *Super Street Fighter IV.* History certainly has a way of repeating itself. But historical coincidences aside, Dee Jay's unique mix of speed, strength, and juggle combos will provide a balanced option for new and experienced players alike.



Guy

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN United States
FIGHTING STYLE Bushin-style Ninjitsu
FIRST APPEARANCE *Street Fighter Alpha*

Originally consigned to the role of Cody's supporting buddy in *Final Fight,* Guy finally got a chance to shine in *Street Fighter Alpha,* which delved into his delinquent childhood and subsequent transformation into a disciplined martial arts master. And believe us when we say "master": Guy is a close-quarters nightmare capable of fast, fluid combos that'll shut down even the most aggressive players.

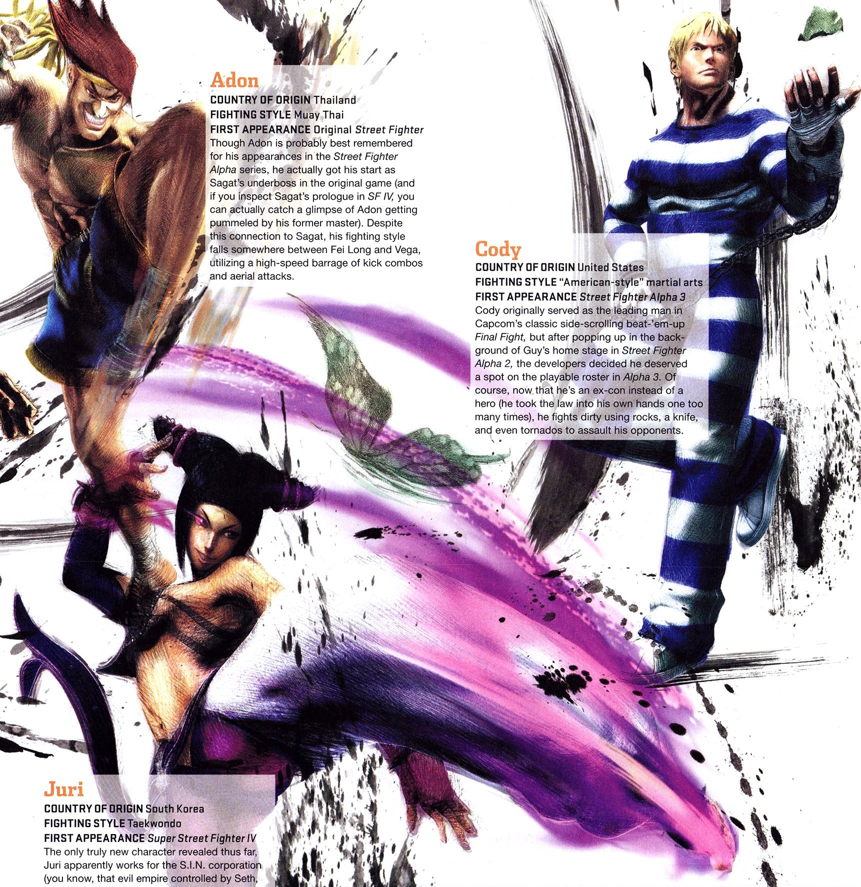


T. Hawk

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Mexico
FIGHTING STYLE Unspecified...he's just a "warrior"
FIRST APPEARANCE *Super Street Fighter II*

Native American warrior T. Hawk debuted, like Dee Jay, in the hugely popular *Super Street Fighter II,* which of course means he's now an instantly recognizable fan favorite. Now that both fighters have joined the ranks of *SF IV,* all 16 iconic fighters from the franchise's most successful iteration are present, and players who prefer grab-based fighters will have another strong option in T. Hawk.

Still don't see your fave character? Let us know who you want to see in *Super Street Fighter IV* at: PTOM_Letters@futureus.com



Adon

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Thailand
FIGHTING STYLE Muay Thai
FIRST APPEARANCE Original *Street Fighter*

Though Adon is probably best remembered for his appearances in the *Street Fighter Alpha* series, he actually got his start as Sagat's underboss in the original game (and if you inspect Sagat's prologue in *SF IV,* you can actually catch a glimpse of Adon getting pummeled by his former master). Despite this connection to Sagat, his fighting style falls somewhere between Fei Long and Vega, utilizing a high-speed barrage of kick combos and aerial attacks.

Cody

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN United States
FIGHTING STYLE "American-style" martial arts
FIRST APPEARANCE *Street Fighter Alpha 3*

Cody originally served as the leading man in Capcom's classic side-scrolling beat-'em-up *Final Fight,* but after popping up in the background of Guy's home stage in *Street Fighter Alpha 2,* the developers decided he deserved a spot on the playable roster in *Alpha 3.* Of course, now that he's an ex-con instead of a hero (he took the law into his own hands one too many times), he fights dirty using rocks, a knife, and even tornados to assault his opponents.

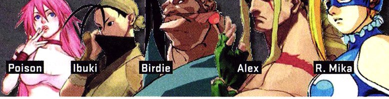
Juri

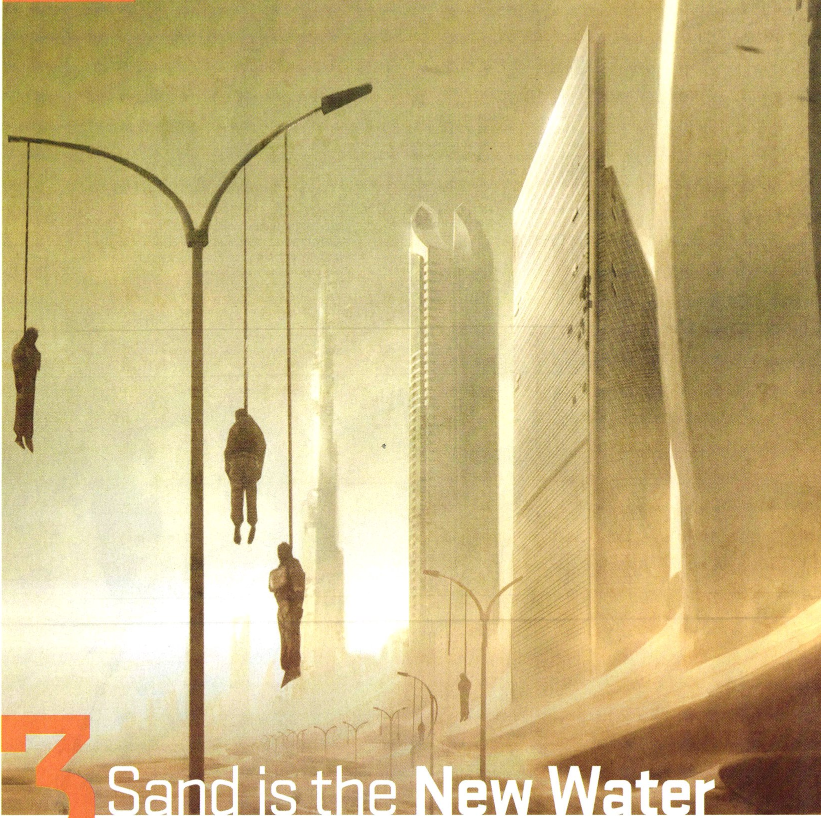
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN South Korea
FIGHTING STYLE Taekwondo
FIRST APPEARANCE *Super Street Fighter IV*

The only truly new character revealed thus far, Juri apparently works for the S.I.N. corporation (you know, that evil empire controlled by Seth, the bastard boss character from *SF IV).* She also has some kind of "ki booster" implanted in her left eye that energizes her attacks. Judging by the videos we've seen of Juri in action, her fighting style is fast and kick heavy, perfect for those of you who are sick of Chun-Li or never liked Crimson Viper.

Six down, two to go

A total of eight new characters will appear in *Super Street Fighter IV,* but only six have been announced thus far. Who will be the final two fighters? Our top five favorites for the open slots...





3 Sand is the New Water

Spec Ops: The Line takes us to the desert to show off its impressive tech

Anyone who's descended into *BioShock's* soggy depths is aware of how effectively it utilized watery special effects. Now, 2K's new Dubai-set military shooter *Spec Ops: The Line* hopes to follow in Big Daddy's puddle-splashing footsteps and do for sand what Ken Levine's shooter did for water.

Like a kick of the grainy, tiny rocks to the face, *Spec Ops'* demo immediately hit us with this ambition. Arriving in Dubai, following a sandstorm that impressively swallowed up the already surreal city, you and your squad discover a soldier's corpse hanging upside down with its head—you guessed it—in the sand. The gameplay that follows hints at an engaging mix of dynamic and set-piece–focused interactions that has the protagonist doing everything but build a castle with the granular substance. He uses it as cover, dumps it on enemies by shooting out structures supporting mounds of it, and even buries some baddies by creating a massive avalanche.

While these examples showcased some cool gameplay elements, we wanted a clearer picture of just how sand would directly affect and complement *Spec Ops'* overall experience. As if he'd been waiting his whole life for that very question, lead level designer Klaus Reich enthusiastically responds, "We will definitely have the most impressive sandstorms ever featured in a game.

It will physically shake you and kick you to the ground; it's like a giant wave...like a wall." Offering a more specific example, Reich continues: "Sand can transform a level into something completely different, geometry-wise. You might be under sniper fire when a sandstorm blasts through; you can now leave your cover because the snipers can't see sh–t, but then you might run into guys that appear out of the storm like ghosts. So, what was just a distant shooting range has now become a dark dungeon with enemies at close range. It becomes a totally new level."

Based on our all too brief glimpse, Reich's promises, and *Spec Ops'* aim to definitively own a force of nature, we left our demo with that same itchy feeling you have after a day at the beach: Despite the need to wash our deepest bodily crevices, we can't wait to return for more when the game hits this fall.

While the physical properties of sand are quite evident, what about the psychological implications? It's irritating. It makes you moody. It makes you want to shoot people.

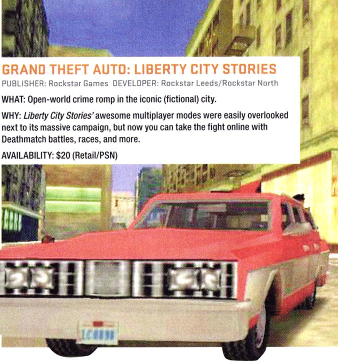
BURNOUT LEGENDS

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: EA UK/Criterion Games

WHAT: A portable best-of compilation of the first three *Burnout* arcade racers.

WHY: No racing series delivers high-octane thrills and crashes like *Burnout,* and with adhocParty, PSP owners finally have the opportunity to experience tense online battles in *Legends* (or its follow-up, *Burnout Dominator).*

AVAILABILITY: $20 (Retail/PSN)



GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds/Rockstar North

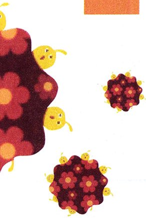
WHAT: Open-world crime romp in the iconic (fictional) city.

WHY: *Liberty City Stories'* awesome multiplayer modes were easily overlooked next to its massive campaign, but now you can take the fight online with Deathmatch battles, races, and more.

AVAILABILITY: $20 (Retail/PSN)

4 Get the Party Started!

Play your PSP against anyone, anywhere



Online multiplayer for PSP has arrived thanks to adhocParty, a free app that uses your PS3's Internet connection to play PSP games online against real competitors. Here are eight games worth dusting off for the party.

Critical
1471
2100/2100
818
2045/2045
HOME
VOL
PSP

2'05.050
Merlot

GRAN TURISMO

PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital

WHAT: Classic racing simulation franchise makes its handheld debut.

WHY: Online play would've been a great fit for *Gran Turismo,* but adhocParty easily addresses that omission. We found several ongoing matches during our time online, so don't delay, sim junkies!

AVAILABILITY: $40 (Retail/PSN)

LOCOROCO 2

PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: SCE Japan Studio

WHAT: Singing, smiling blobs team up to scale colorful settings.

WHY: *LocoRoco 2's* simple Loco Rider mini-game lets you bump other players into hazards. It's a quick diversion, but if you haven't unlocked it, what better reason to jump back into this excellent platformer?

AVAILABILITY: $20 (Retail/PSN)

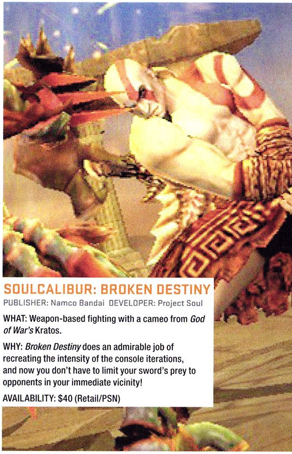
MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE

PUBLISHER: Capcom DEVELOPER: Capcom

WHAT: An enemy-slashing, loot-collecting action RPG.

WHY: *Monster Hunter* is a multiplayer game at heart, and now you can find teammates at the ready. Capcom has been active in organizing the community, and we found numerous available games in our searches.

AVAILABILITY: $30 (Retail/PSN)



SOULCALIBUR: BROKEN DESTINY

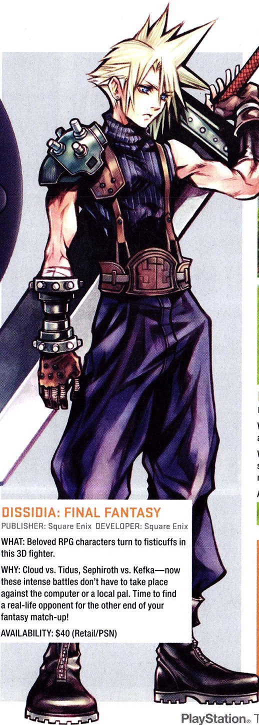
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai DEVELOPER: Project Soul

WHAT: Weapon-based fighting with a cameo from *God of War's* Kratos.

WHY: *Broken Destiny* does an admirable job of recreating the intensity of the console iterations, and now you don't have to limit your sword's prey to opponents in your immediate vicinity!

AVAILABILITY: $40 (Retail/PSN)

SONY
POWER
HOLD
START



DISSIDIA: FINAL FANTASY

PUBLISHER: Square Enix DEVELOPER: Square Enix

WHAT: Beloved RPG characters turn to fisticuffs in this 3D fighter.

WHY: Cloud vs. Tidus, Sephiroth vs. Kefka—now these intense battles don't have to take place against the computer or a local pal. Time to find a real-life opponent for the other end of your fantasy match-up!

AVAILABILITY: $40 (Retail/PSN)

PHANTASY STAR PORTABLE

PUBLISHER: Sega DEVELOPER: Sonic Team/Alfa System

WHAT: Sega's storied RPG franchise brings four-player adventuring to PSP.

WHY: Those of us with past *Phantasy Star Online* habits can speak to its addictive powers, and the PSP follow-up delivers more of the familiar co-op dungeon crawling experience.

AVAILABILITY: $40 (Retail-only at press time)

How do I join the party?

adhocParty for PlayStation®Portable

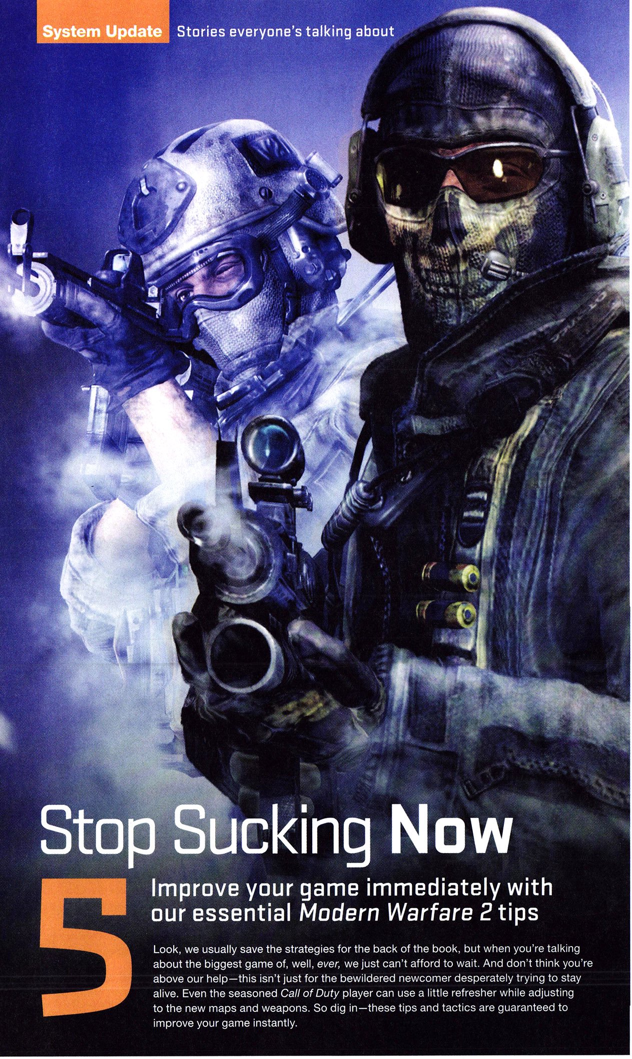
Getting started is incredibly easy! Here's how:

1 Download adhocParty from the PlayStation Store on your PS3.

2 Make sure your PSP is linked with the PS3 by going into "Remote Play Settings" under Settings on the PS3 XMB.

3 Launch adhocParty on the PS3 (under the Game category), and choose "Start" to browse the lobbies. Once you've found or started a room, enter the adhoc multiplayer mode of your chosen PSP game and either create or enter a match. Alternately, choose the "Search" option from the main menu and adhocParty will recognize your game and search for online matches.

Your PS3 must use a hard-wired Internet connection, though it needs Wi-Fi capabilities to connect with the PSP—so those of you with early 20GB PS3 models are sadly left out of this party.



Stop Sucking **Now**

5 Improve your game immediately with our essential *Modern Warfare 2* tips

Look, we usually save the strategies for the back of the book, but when you're talking about the biggest game of, well, *ever,* we just can't afford to wait. And don't think you're above our help—this isn't just for the bewildered newcomer desperately trying to stay alive. Even the seasoned *Call of Duty* player can use a little refresher while adjusting to the new maps and weapons. So dig in—these tips and tactics are guaranteed to improve your game instantly.

Best Perks

Thanks to a slew of new options, *MW2* makes it harder to answer the question "What custom class should I play as?" Hence, we present to you PTOM's perfect classes, tailored to every play-style imaginable.

The Ninja

MW2 introduces several new means for players to detect their rivals, but thanks to Cold-Blooded and Ninja perks, the Ninja is still as invisible as ever. This is the perfect loadout for those wishing to get behind enemy lines to flank 'n' shank snipers.

PRIMARY WEAPON
Vector (Suppressor)

SECONDARY WEAPON
TMP (Suppressor)

EQUIPMENT
Tactical Insertion

SPECIAL GRENADES
Smoke Grenade

SLOT 1
Marathon Pro

SLOT 2
Cold-Blooded Pro

SLOT 3
Ninja Pro

STREAK LOADOUT
Counter-UAV, Harrier, Stealth Bomber, Final Stand

The Play-Maker

Unlike class-based FPS titles before it, *CoD4* didn't feature a support role. Infinity Ward has figured out a support role that's wildly fun to play, yet still vital to teamplay. Use the Riot Shield to protect your team, and SitRep to counter enemy traps in your team's way.

PRIMARY WEAPON
Riot Shield

SECONDARY WEAPON
Striker (Holographic sight)

EQUIPMENT
Throwing Knife

SPECIAL GRENADES
Smoke Grenade

SLOT 1
Marathon Pro

SLOT 2
Lightweight Pro

SLOT 3
SitRep Pro

STREAK LOADOUT
UAV, Precision Airstrike, EMP, Painkiller

The Defender

Like protecting your flag in Ground War? Enemy harriers becoming a pain in the ass? This class answers both those questions with a withering barrage of targeted LMG fire. Just keep firing, and nobody's coming anywhere near you.

PRIMARY WEAPON
AUG HBAR (FMJ, Grip)

SECONDARY WEAPON
Javelin

EQUIPMENT
Claymore

SPECIAL GRENADES
Flashbang

SLOT 1
Bling Pro

SLOT 2
Stopping Power Pro

SLOT 3
SitRep Pro

STREAK LOADOUT
Counter-UAV, Sentry Gun, Pave Low, Final Stand

Five key tips to stay alive

New to *CoD* multiplayer? Here are our top tactics to keep you safe

① Be Agile

Until you've learned the maps, you'll need to stay on the move. Never stop to fire your gun, and never mantle over an obstacle when you can jump it and keep your momentum. Topflight players can jump over cover and land prone in the blink of an eye—watch your killcams to see how they move. Just don't get too giddy and start running into open fire—learn the running rhythm that best suits your class.

② Be Aware

Don't go careening around corners unless you're absolutely certain there won't be an enemy waiting for you. Always aim down your weapon when turning a corner, whether crouching or at speed, as you'll spy snipers and get the drop on fools more readily. Make the most of your HUD, as often a quick glance at your map will be the difference between life and an ignominious death underneath an airstrike.

③ Be Experimental

Though it might be tempting, don't stick to one weapon class. Firstly, some maps lean more toward a certain style of play. Secondly, knowing your guns will make you a better player—time spent with a sniper rifle will help you understand how to make your long-range SMG fire more accurate, for example. We usually level up three weapons simultaneously, switching classes when map-appropriate.

④ Be Savvy

Unlike *CoD4, Modern Warfare 2* has a lot of equipment and perks meant for advanced players. If you're new to the series, avoid playing around with things like Tactical Insertion and One Man Army until you've learned the fundamentals of all the weapon classes and maps. Nothing will rile your teammates more than if you go for an OMA class-change or drop a Tactical Insertion in the middle of a killzone.

⑤ Be Annoying

People might hate you for it, but there's a reason the grenade launcher (along with the newly introduced Thumper) is called the "noob tube"—it's a fairly easy means to rack up kills and, more importantly, XP. There's no shame in using it if you need the confidence boost—or a string of kills to unlock a new weapon. Besides, thanks to Blast Shield, players can't whine about overpowered weapons as much as they used to in *CoD4.*

Best Perks

The Sniper

With the addition of the Thermal Scope and Tactical Insertion, snipers just got a whole lot more fun to play. Note the silenced Striker: the perfect counter to ninjas.

PRIMARY WEAPON
Intervention (Thermal Scope, Suppressor)

SECONDARY WEAPON
Striker (Holographic sight, Suppressor)

EQUIPMENT
Tactical Insertion

SPECIAL GRENADES
Smoke

SLOT 1
Bling Pro

SLOT 2
Cold-Blooded Pro

SLOT 3
Ninja Pro

STREAK LOADOUT
Counter-UAV, Precision Airstrike, Chopper Gunner, Painkiller, The Mad Bomber

The Mad Bomber

We honestly thought Infinity Ward would remove the Grenade Launcher (aka: the noob tube) from *MW2* multiplayer. We were wrong. IW simply added more easy-kill explosives for the Mad Bombers out there, and the perk (Scavenger) to keep them armed indefinitely.

PRIMARY WEAPON
ACR (Grenade Launcher)

SECONDARY WEAPON
Thumper

EQUIPMENT
Frag Grenade

SPECIAL GRENADES
Flashbang

SLOT 1
Scavenger Pro

SLOT 2
Danger Close Pro

SLOT 3
Scrambler Pro

STREAK LOADOUT
Care Package, Predator Missile, Tactical Nuke, Martyrdom

THE PATH TO PRESTIGE: SEVEN WAYS TO GAIN XP QUICKLY

1 Look to the skies: taking out UAVs and aircraft will net you loads of XP.

2 Play Ground War with an LMG.

3 Leveling up with a speedy SMG class? Play CTF for high yield flag-stealing bonuses.

4 Avoid Hardcore. The extra XP is tempting, but respawns are lengthy.

5 Headshots with powerful guns will often yield both the Headshot and One Shot Kill bonus.

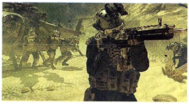
6 Use a low-kill Killstreak like a UAV when learning. Each call-in brings in more XP.

7 Use launchers plus Danger Close perk for elusive multi-kill bonuses.

Essential Team Tactics

Here are four key squad strategies we've learned from playing against unstoppable teams

SHIELDS UP!
Modern Warfare 2 introduces the biggest tactical change to multiplayer so far: the riot shield. It allows members of your team to run interference during assaults, and to stop an advance dead in its tracks. You'll never need more than two players with them though…



SQUAD BALANCE
You'll need to make sure you have a good balance of classes. Of course, this depends on the selected playlist and map—don't stroll into Favela with a team of six riot shielders. Broadly speaking, you'll want a ninja or LMG/Assault class for every sniper.

STAY CLOSE, STAY DISPERSED
A good team will stick together to maintain a strong firepower advantage while staying dispersed enough to avoid the group being wiped out by a Predator missile. In Search and Destroy, you'll want to spread out even more, while still keeping visual contact.

FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE
Bored of kill-cams and respawn timers? Don't be—you can use them to your advantage by gathering intelligence on the enemy's position and weaponry. And just because you're dead, doesn't mean you can't tell your squadmates about the sniper hiding in in the cabin.

6

Little Bit Planet

Retro done right in the aptly named *3D Dot Game Heroes*

Quick! Turn the page! And don't come back until that Nintendo lawyer is good and gone…

Back already? Good. Because we have a treat for you. Atlus is bringing the bizarre retro fantasy *3D Dot Game Heroes* to the U.S. this May, and we couldn't be more pleased.

But why the secrecy? Because despite the quirky, cubist graphics, this game reminds us of a certain 2D classic from our youth. Here's a hint: It starts with "zuh" and ends with "elda." And we first played it on a system whose initials are "N," "E," and "S" (not necessarily in that order, but they probably are).

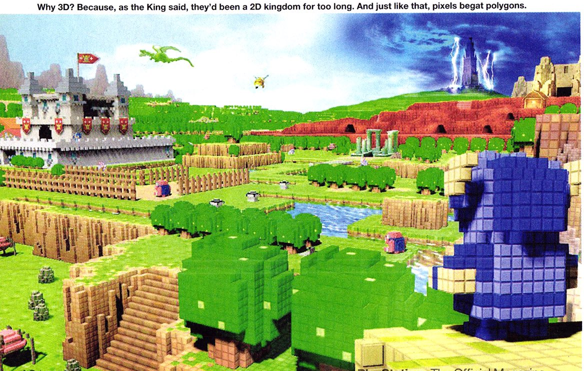
From the simple story—save the kingdom from the return of an evil force by collecting orbs squirreled away in half-a-dozen different dungeons—to the gameplay itself, *Dot* is homage at its most actionable. You even start with a *wooden* sword, and you eventually get a boomerang, a bow-and-arrow, boots that let you dash into obstacles, bombs that blow open cracks in walls, and a fairy companion to help you along your journey.

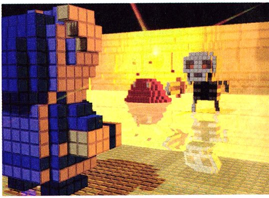
So it's old-school gaming with a few new-school graphical tricks, like bump-mapping (whatever that is) and, uh, sparkly water effects. Why should anyone whose age is below that of the current Playboy Playmate care? Because it's also astoundingly fun.

Now, we're the first to admit that not all nostalgia is healthy when it comes to gaming—but when they got it right, they got it right. And with this one, developer From Software picked the very best of that bygone era as a starting point, then added a layer of gloss and polish to make it feel fresh again. *3D Dot Game Heroes* is addictive, tough, charming—we know because we sampled a few different areas in an all-too-brief playtest.

So spread the word. Just be sure there are no Nintendo lawyers within earshot.

Why 3D? Because, as the King said, they'd been a 2D kingdom for too long. And just like that, pixels begat polygons.





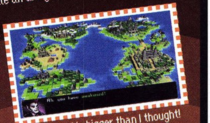
PlayStation.Portable

PlayStation.Network

PlayStation.Network
Only On PlayStation.
Holy Invasion of Privacy, Badman!™ 2
Time To Tighten Up Security!
TEEN
ADOLESCENTS
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
NIS America

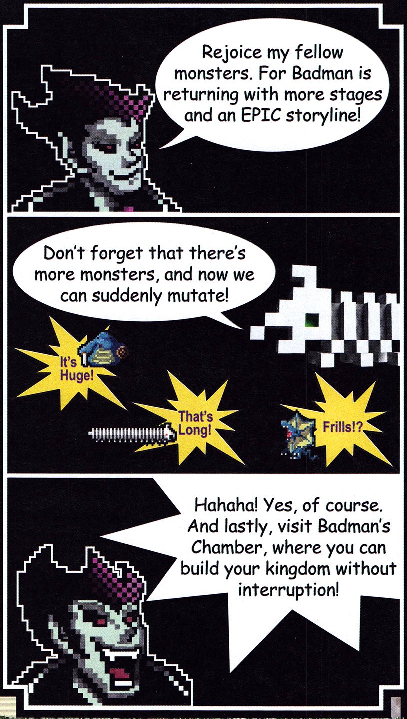
Psst, Holy Invasion of Privacy, Badman!™ will be included as Bonus Content on the UMD® version of Holy Invasion of Privacy Badman!™ 2. Visit www.HolyBadman.com for the special code.

<< Dig soil to create an army!


<< The world is bigger than I thought!

<< Mutants! Run for your life!

Download the Demo from the PlayStation®Store today!


Rejoice my fellow monsters. For Badman is returning with more stages and an EPIC storyline!
Don't forget that there's more monsters, and now we can suddenly mutate!
It's Huge!
That's Long!
Frills!?
Hahaha! Yes, of course. And lastly, visit Badman's Chamber, where you can build your kingdom without interruption!

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Animated Blood
Language
Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes

NIS America

ACQUIRE

Coming March 2010!!

www.HolyBadman.com

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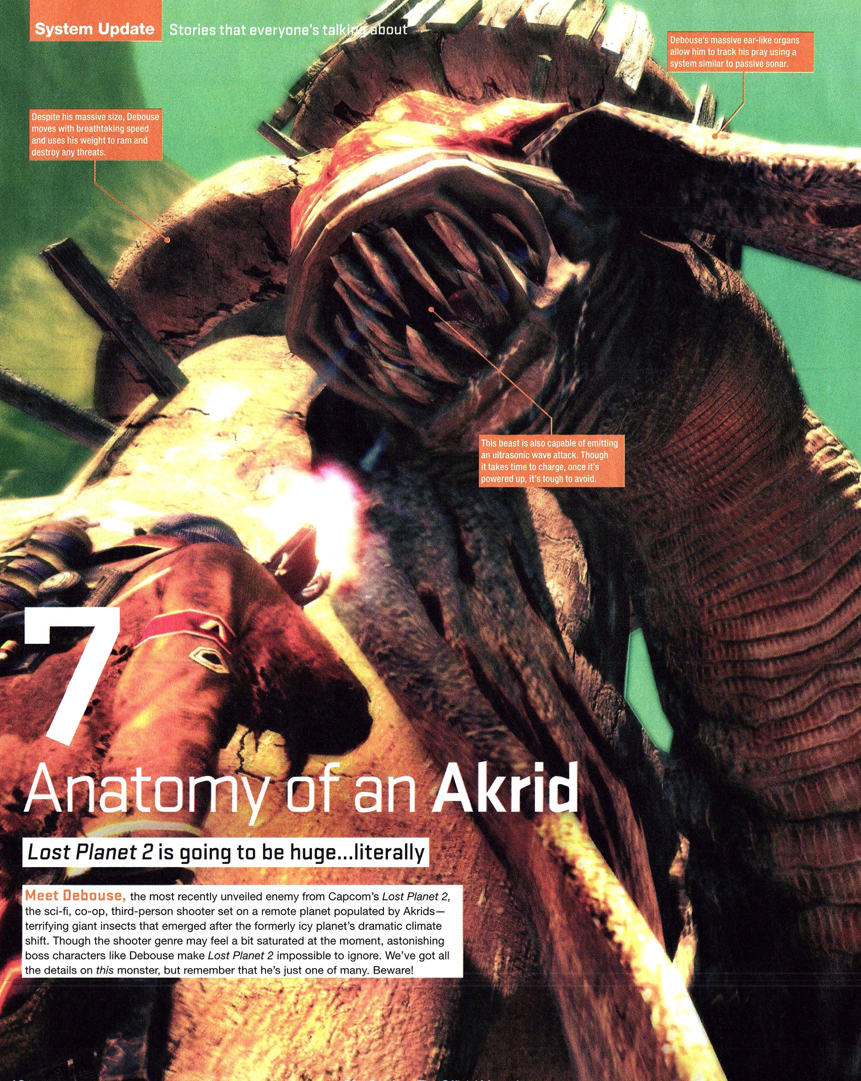


Despite his massive size, Debouse moves with breathtaking speed and uses his weight to ram and destroy any threats.

Debouse's massive ear-like organs allow him to track his pray using a system similar to passive sonar.

This beast is also capable of emitting an ultrasonic wave attack. Though it takes time to charge, once it's powered up, it's tough to avoid.

7

Anatomy of an **Akrid**

Lost Planet 2 is going to be huge...literally

Meet Debouse, the most recently unveiled enemy from Capcom's *Lost Planet 2,* the sci-fi, co-op, third-person shooter set on a remote planet populated by Akrids—terrifying giant insects that emerged after the formerly icy planet's dramatic climate shift. Though the shooter genre may feel a bit saturated at the moment, astonishing boss characters like Debouse make *Lost Planet 2* impossible to ignore. We've got all the details on *this* monster, but remember that he's just one of many. Beware!

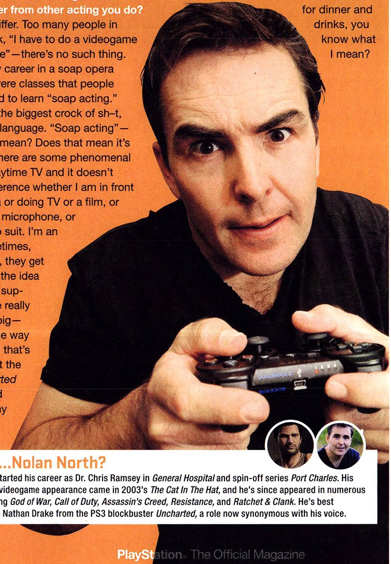
8 Nolan North is *not* a videogame actor

The man behind *Uncharted's* Nathan Drake shares his secret for voicing memorable characters

Nolan, you're in so many games, do you ever worry about being overexposed?
Not really. For a number of games I change my voice. But it's the animator's job to make the characters look different. Nobody gets tired of seeing Brad Pitt in different movies, nobody gets tired of seeing Tom Hanks even though he's not changing his physical appearance or most certainly his voice, so I'd hope people wouldn't get tired of hearing me.

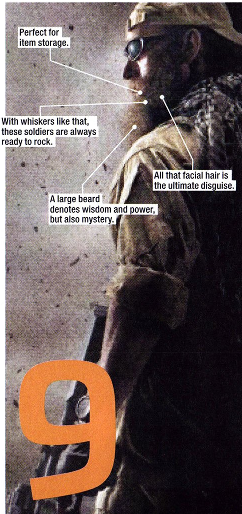
What do you think is the key to giving a good performance in a game? How does it differ from other acting you do?
It doesn't differ. Too many people in games think, "I have to do a videogame performance"—there's no such thing. I started my career in a soap opera and there were classes that people could attend to learn "soap acting." And it was the biggest crock of sh–t, excuse the language. "Soap acting"—what's that mean? Does that mean it's bad? No. There are some phenomenal actors in daytime TV and it doesn't make a difference whether I am in front of a camera or doing TV or a film, or in front of a microphone, or in a mo-cap suit. I'm an actor. Sometimes, with games, they get people into the idea that they're supposed to be really broad and big—that's not the way I see it. And that's certainly not the way *Uncharted* has handled it. That's why Gordon Hunt is directing, someone who's done lots of theater directing, lots of TV, and voiceover—he knows all those mediums, he's had experience with all of them.

And the most important question of all: If you had to choose, who do you prefer, Chloe or Elena?
If I have to pick? Well, I think I like Elena with some Chloe on the side. If I'm settling down, Elena. I can trust her. If I'm going to keep gallivanting around the world with Sully, I'd like to sail into a port and meet Chloe for dinner and drinks, you know what I mean?



Who is...Nolan North?

Nolan North started his career as Dr. Chris Ramsey in *General Hospital* and spin-off series *Port Charles.* His first credited videogame appearance came in 2003's *The Cat In The Hat,* and he's since appeared in numerous series including *God of War, Call of Duty, Assassin's Creed, Resistance,* and *Ratchet & Clank.* He's best recognized as Nathan Drake from the PS3 blockbuster *Uncharted,* a role now synonymous with his voice.


Perfect for item storage.
With whiskers like that, these soldiers are always ready to rock.
All that facial hair is the ultimate disguise.
A large beard denotes wisdom and power, but also mystery.

9 What the beard tells us about Medal of Honor

KICKING THE DUST of World War II off its standard issue combat boots and boldly going exactly where *Call of Duty* has gone before, Electronic Arts' seminal first-person shooter franchise *Medal of Honor* will be joining the 21st century with a modern warfare simulator of its own. According to the original announcement, the game is set in Afghanistan and follows a small group of Tier 1 Operators—the smartest, fastest, most good-looking special operatives the U.S. Army has to offer. But the real secret to their power lies somewhere deep within their crazy ZZ Top beards...

Kratos thinks bigger is better when it comes to bosses.

10

Are boss battles worth the effort?

PTOM's toughest editors give their final verdict on climactic conflicts

YES

Says the power-hungry bossman

Gary Steinman

The main reason I play games? To escape—not just from my mundane existence in this morose world, but toward a more fantastic place overstuffed with spectacular moments. And that's why I adore boss battles. They make me feel powerful.

These days, bosses have gotten even bigger, thanks to games like *God of War* and this month's darling, *Bayonetta*. Is there anything more satisfying than taking down a deity who's a thousand times bigger than you are? So what if it's absurdly over-the-top. So what if you can barely see your character while he clambers around a stone-skinned, 12-story, 50-headed goon with a serpent tail that shoots poisonous snowballs?

I loved boss battles back when they were the only way to make a game challenging. And I still love them now that they're absurdly massive slapfests that make me feel even more powerful than I ever imagined.

NO

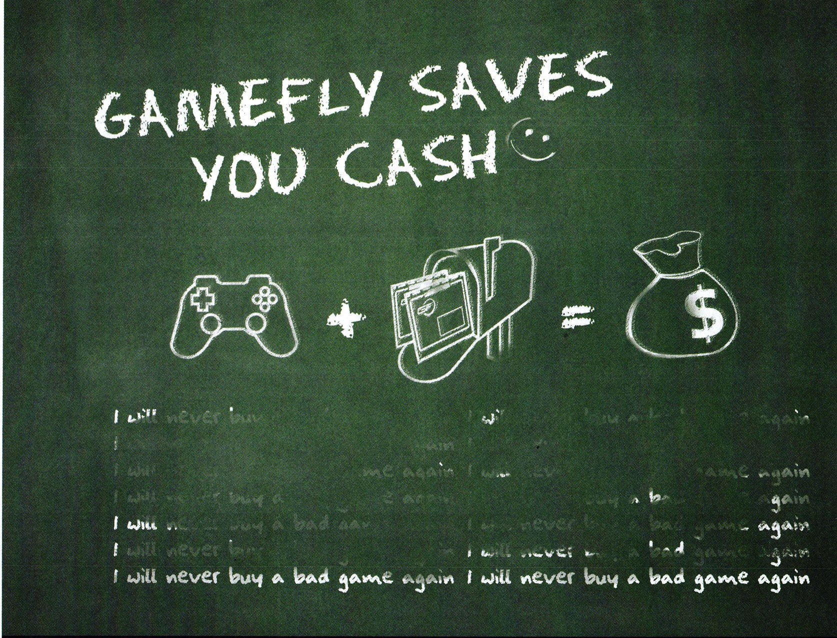
Says the story-seeking softie

Scott Butterworth

Look, boss battles are fine *in theory*—but they're often poorly executed or completely shoehorned in and serve only to add frustration or tedium to games that are otherwise perfectly fun.

Take *BioShock*, for example: engrossing atmosphere, sophisticated gameplay, insanely inappropriate final boss. It's as if the developers included the final boss merely out of some misguided sense of obligation, cowed by the non-existent expectations of their audience. And in the process, they took us completely out of the moment and sabotaged the climax of an otherwise stellar game.

Even those battles that don't feel ridiculously out of place are rarely fun. When every oversized enemy is merely a quick-time event waiting to happen or a walking weakpoint that you'll have to awkwardly circle for hours, it's pretty tough to suspend your disbelief and enjoy the experience. Developers need to find a better way.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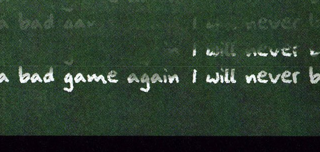
PS3
WHITE KNIGHT CHRONICLES
BIOSHOCK 2
DANTE'S INFERNO

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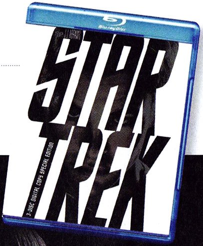
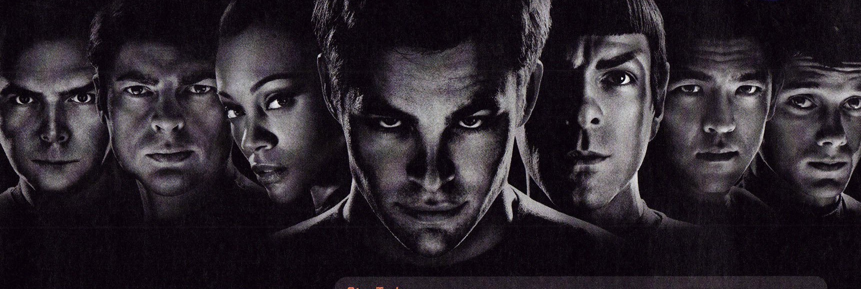
Blu-ray Central

We examine the final batch of the past year's blockbusters and embrace all things romantic by picking up some date movies



PlayStation: The Official Magazine
PICK OF THE MONTH



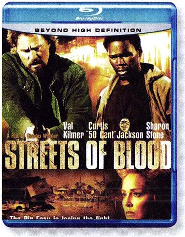
Star Trek

PRICE: $39.99 **RATED** PG-13

| MOVIE | For the first half of J.J. Abrams' so-called reboot of *Star Trek*, the movie is an exciting, funny, brilliantly cast roller-coaster ride. The younger cast revitalizes the classic characters, the action is fun, and you can overlook the myriad of plot holes. Then the movie veers even further into cliché, blatantly ripping off *Star Wars* in a move that—to this hardcore *Trek* lover—single-handedly destroys the whole history of the original series. That might be fine, except the script doesn't live up to the production values of the rest of the movie. Most people probably won't care in the end—it's still great fun—but for all the pomp and circumstance, the sloppy story here is a real disservice to die-hard fans.

| EXTRAS | Excellent commentary and a host of solid and informative documentaries give the special edition side of the package real legs. Deleted scenes and virtual starship tours are nice as well, and overall it adds a lot of value for fans.

MOVIE	★★★★
EXTRAS	★★★★



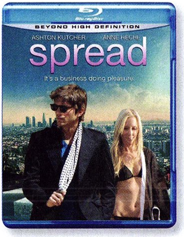
Streets of Blood

PRICE: $34.98 **RATED:** R

| MOVIE | What the hell happened to Val Kilmer? Capable of great acting, this one-time A-lister has doomed himself to horrible celluloid tripe like this blatantly awful, nonsensical cop drama. Sharon Stone and rapper 50 Cent are also trapped in this nightmare, and the movie is so bad that you'll actually feel sorry for the cast.

| EXTRAS | Misguided director's commentary and a cheap, pointless featurette. Apparently, the director actually believes he made a good film.

MOVIE	★
EXTRAS	★½



Spread

PRICE: $34.98 **RATED:** R

| MOVIE | Ashton Kutcher playing a man whore who leeches off of cougars doesn't seem like a stretch, but the perpetual man-child still lacks the acting chops to really pull off a gritty, jaded grifter in this middling sex drama. The movie is interesting in spots, has an amazing amount of female nudity, and an enjoyably ironic twist for Kutcher's unlikeable boy toy character, but is still mediocre fare at best.

| EXTRAS | The actors' commentary track is actually fairly interesting, and there's a director-hosted picture-in-picture track as well as some puff featurettes.

MOVIE	★½
EXTRAS	★★

Jason D'Aprile is a die-hard romantic waiting for zombie romances to take off and kill off those damn vampire movies. E-mail him at **PTOM_Bluray@futureus.com.**

Blu-ray Disc
DIRECTOR'S CUT
CHRISTIAN BALE SAM WORTHINGTON
TERMINATOR SALVATION

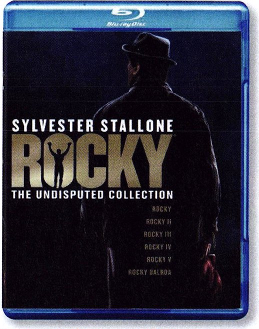
Terminator Salvation: Director's Cut

PRICE: $35.99 **RATED:** PG-13/UNRATED

| MOVIE | After *Terminator 3,* it's likely no one wanted a fourth, let alone a whole new trilogy—especially one directed by a lackluster choice like McG. Still, *Salvation* has some truly great and intense action sequences, and it's nice to see the series' apocalyptic future in such vivid detail. It's a shame then that the plot has so many lapses in logic and is obsessed with making not-so-subtle references to the first two movies. If you don't mind action movies that seem more like a non-interactive videogame, *Salvation* is fine, but as the introduction to a new trilogy, it's a decidedly rocky start.

| EXTRAS | WB has included their in-movie experience functionality here—much like *Watchmen* or the new *300*. It's a fairly extensive look behind the scenes guided by McG, and the information on some of the great stunts and new robots is worth a look even if you aren't wild about the film itself.

MOVIE ★★★
EXTRAS ★★★½


Blu-ray Disc
SYLVESTER STALLONE
ROCKY
THE UNDISPUTED COLLECTION
ROCKY
ROCKY II
ROCKY III
ROCKY IV
ROCKY V
ROCKY BALBOA

Rocky: The Undisputed Collection

PRICE: $99.98 **RATED:** PG/PG-13

| MOVIE | The original *Rocky* is, without a doubt, a great and iconic American movie. The sequel is good as well, but then the '80s began and Stallone started pumping out Reagan-era blockbusters for both Rocky and Rambo that haven't aged nearly as well. Through the series, Stallone's performance as the endearing boxer never wavers though, and the movies are still goofy fun. If you've got a hankering for '80s nostalgia, this is certainly a primo collection, and this is the Blu debut for all but the first and last in the series.

| EXTRAS | Aside from *Rocky Balboa* having all the extras of its previous release (including great commentary from Stallone), there's an extra disc chock full of Rocky goodness. The highlight is a feature-length documentary on the original film, and while not all the extras are great, there's a variety of engaging shorts on the series, the actors, and boxing.

MOVIE ★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★

Blu-ray Disc
SASHA GREY IN A STEVEN SODERBERGH AFFAIR
WRITTEN BY DAVID LEVIEN & BRIAN KOPPELMAN
THE GIRLFRIEND EXPERIENCE
"GRADE: A"
ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
"★★★★"
CHICAGO SUN-TIMES
"SASHA GREY'S PERFORMANCE IS TOTALLY CAPTIVATING
THROUGH GREY, SODERBERGH MAKES PRETTINESS DEVASTATING."
ESQUIRE
SEE IT WITH SOMEONE YOU ****

The Girlfriend Experience

PRICE: $34.98 **RATED:** R

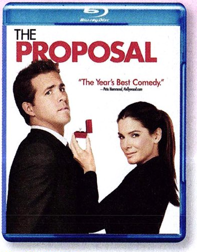
| MOVIE | The anti-Valentine's Day movie of the month, Steven Soderbergh's documentary-style look at a specialized call girl who gives clients the illusion of a relationship is fascinating, sad, and leaves you wanting to see more of these train-wreck characters. Porn starlet Sasha Grey is perfectly cast as the lead. She's beautiful, understated, and even demure here. Certainly not for everyone, but still worth watching.

| EXTRAS | Soderbergh has a talent for good commentary, and with Grey in the conversation it's as interesting as the film itself. There's an unrated alternate cut as well, but oddly there's very little difference from the theatrical version.

MOVIE ★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★½

PTOM's Valentine's Day picks....

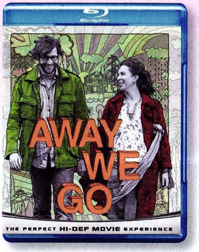
For the Safe Date...


Blu-ray Disc
THE PROPOSAL
"The Year's Best Comedy."
—Pete Hammond, Hollywood.com

The Proposal

Sandra Bullock's history of romantic comedies is hit and miss, but thankfully as far as formulaic romantic comedies go, *The Proposal* has enough laughs and chemistry to make it an enjoyable date night pick.

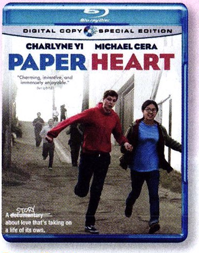
For Your Artsy 30-something date...


Blu-ray Disc
AWAY WE GO
THE PERFECT HI-DEF MOVIE EXPERIENCE

Away We Go

The perfect cure for standard Hollywood romances, *Away We Go* is hilarious, touching, and witty. Aimed at 30-somethings who spent their 20s slacking and suddenly find themselves dealing with the real world (in this case, pregnancy), it's a road movie with quirky, realistic characters and terrific dialogue.

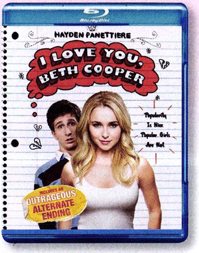
For Your Artsy 20-something date...


Blu-ray Disc
DIGITAL COPY SPECIAL EDITION
CHARLYNE YI MICHAEL CERA
PAPER HEART
"Charming, inventive, and immensely enjoyable."
A ~~documentary~~ STORY about love that's taking on a life of its own.

Paper Heart

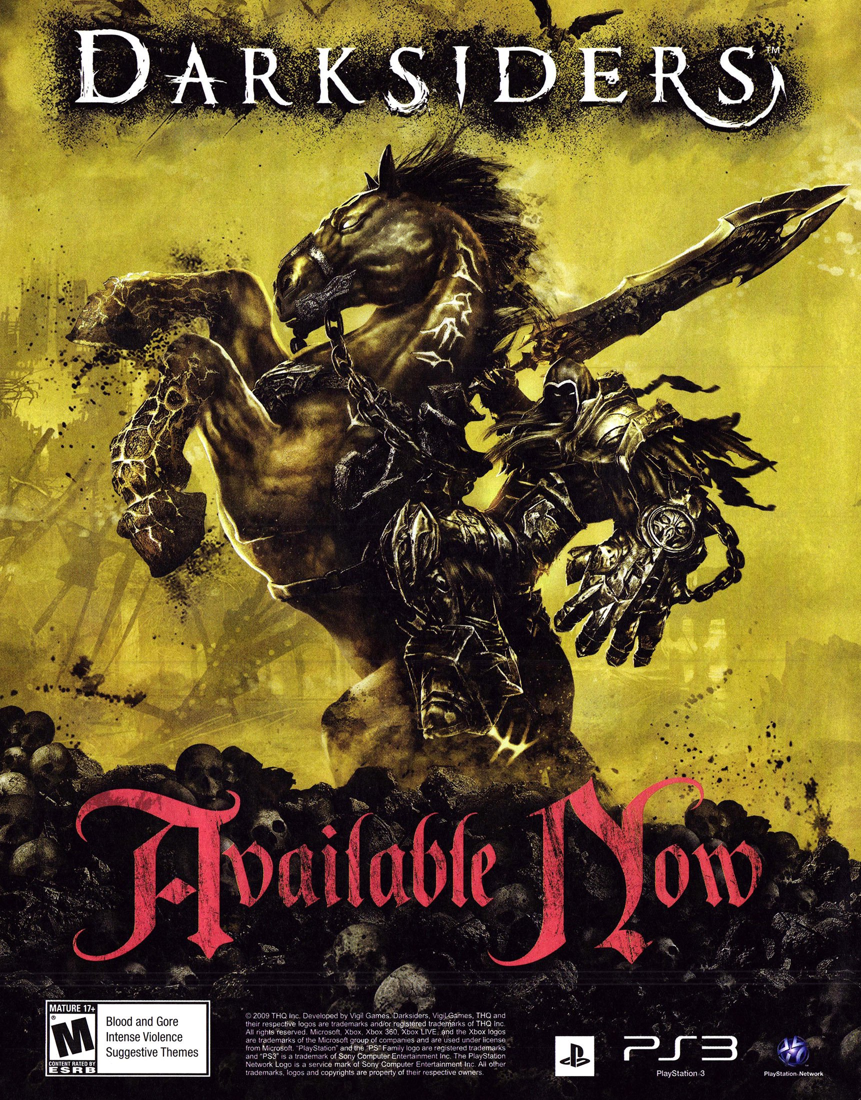
Around these parts, we don't throw the term adorable around often. But, dammit, this crazy pseudo-documentary about comedian Charlyne Yi's quest to find the meaning of love is adorably artsy and way beyond offbeat.

For your underage teenager date...


Blu-ray Disc
HAYDEN PANETTIERE
I LOVE YOU, BETH COOPER
Popularity Is Nice Popular Girls Are Not
INCLUDES AN OUTRAGEOUS ALTERNATE ENDING

I Love You, Beth Cooper

While anyone over 24 might find stabbing their eyes with sharp objects more fun, it's a hit with the kids and *Heroes'* Hayden Panettiere certainly lights up the screen.


DARKSIDERS™
Available Now
MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Suggestive Themes
PS3
PlayStation 3
PlayStation Network

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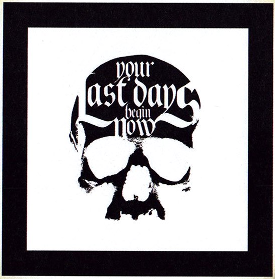
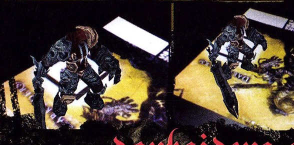
YOUR LAST DAYS



"10 OUT OF 10"
-PLAY MAGAZINE

augmented reality
INSTRUCTIONS

1. LOG ON TO: WWW.CONTESTS.GAMESRADAR.COM/DARKSIDERS
2. TURN ON YOUR COMPUTER'S WEBCAM. TURN OFF ANY POP-UP BLOCKERS.
3. PLACE THE PRINTED MARKER FROM THIS MAGAZINE FACE UP ON A FLAT SURFACE.
4. PLACE YOUR WEBCAM SO THAT IT FACES THE MARKER.
5. CLICK LAUNCH TO START THE EXPERIENCE.



darksiders.com

XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE VIGIL THQ

SQUADS

Teamwork wins

Work together or fail as a team...

DRIVE-BY We've only played Goldrush (an asymmetrical battle to destroy/protect different sets of crates that get further into enemy territory as the battle progresses) during our hands-on but the vehicles complemented the squad system and varied pace perfectly. Even if you start driving a tank alone, chances are a member of your squad will re-spawn in your gunner's seat before you reach the objective. This kind of teamplay is also encouraged and rewarded by XP bonuses.

> Spawning with three squads of four men before climbing into tanks, Hummers, and ATVs and rolling into battle feels epic, even by comparison to *Modern Warfare 2.*

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

More tactically savvy than *Modern Warfare 2*

PS3 AVAILABLE: **March** GENRE: **First-Person Shooter** PUBLISHER: **Electronic Arts** DEVELOPER: **Digital Illusions CE**

Poor old *Battlefield: Bad Company 2.* Who'd want to be the first modern war shooter to release after *Modern Warfare 2?* Especially one that relies so heavily on its online modes. So, we guess the question has to be: how do the two stack up?

Well, a few minutes into our session with the open Beta and comparisons with *Modern Warfare* start to feel irrelevant. Spawning with three squads of four men before climbing into tanks, Hummers, and ATVs and rolling into battle feels epic, even by comparison to both Infinity Ward's recent masterpiece *and* the co-op focused *Operation Flashpoint. BC2* gives you more choice too. Become a rifleman stocked up with grenades and bullets; heal and revive your friends by playing a medic; blow up or repair stuff as an engineer; or headshot fools from range as a sniper. It's tried and tested stuff—a polished balancing act that gives opportunity for tactics, makes teamwork vital, and encourages genuinely varied play. And in this game the balancing feels near-perfect.

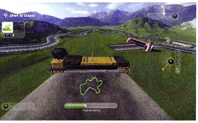
As you progress through the ranks more customization options and "specialization" slots (extra grenades or ammo, unlimited sprint) become available. It motivates you to progress but can be initially frustrating. *MW2* restricts your first few loadouts, but the early weaponry still feels lethal. In contrast, you'll benefit more from taking a supporting role in your initial *BC2* matches.

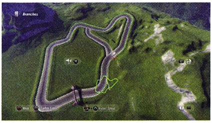
Bullet sponge

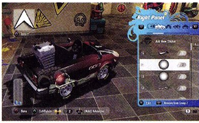
You'll also notice that the soldiers can take one hell of a beating. Although lacking *CoD's* satisfying "bite," the increased health makes sense in the grand scheme of game mechanics. Medics would be dead weight if you died after taking three bullets. Likewise, there would be no point in taking cover in a building if one explosion blew your face off. It's also a good way to prolong the standoffs—unlike *CoD's* paintball-style encounters. Pushing the front line in *BC2* takes more than a few headshots. It's all about squad balance and coordination.

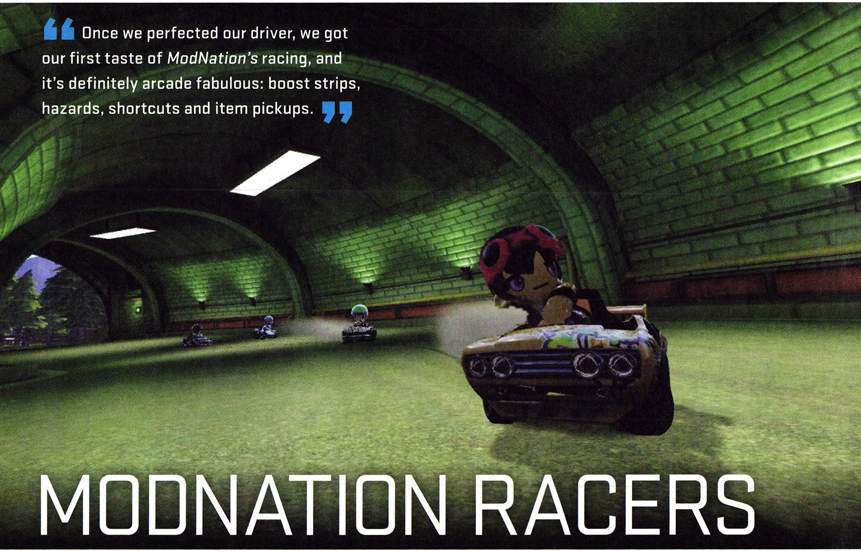
Still, as with past *Battlefield* games, the vehicles are the stars. The Beta only treated us to tanks, Hummers, ATVs and—the newest addition to the battlefield—a controllable UAV (no choppers yet unfortunately), but that was enough to remind us how fun it is to drive one of your buddies around while he unleashes high-caliber bullets from a massive gun. The arcade handling fits in perfectly with the superb destruction engine (this time around, everything can be leveled) and the UAV provides an extra tactical edge, giving more cerebral players a chance to highlight objectives and enemies before striking.

But the question remains: does it out-class *Modern Warfare 2?* In some areas yes, in others no. Popping heads is less instantly gratifying and the action runs a little slower, but the squad element certainly feels more developed, and it does have vehicles, making this a more tactical experience. | Owen Hill







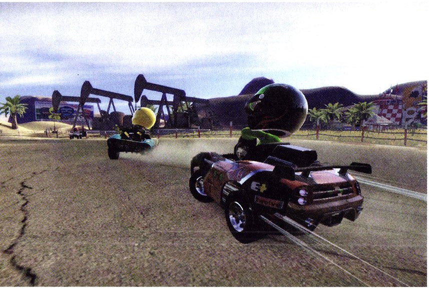


> “Once we perfected our driver, we got our first taste of *ModNation's* racing, and it's definitely arcade fabulous: boost strips, hazards, shortcuts and item pickups.”

MODNATION RACERS

Mario Kart for the DIY generation

PS3 **AVAILABLE:** February **GENRE:** Kart Racer **PUBLISHER:** SCEA **DEVELOPER:** United Front Games

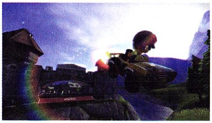


↑ The combat kart racing action is fast and furious resulting in frequent lead changes.

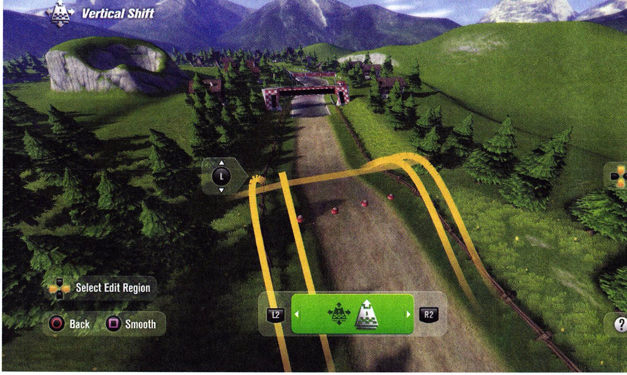
Simulation racers like *Gran Turismo* certainly have their place (*GT5's* on our cover with darn good reason), but some of us need to blow stuff up to truly enjoy a racing game. Enter *ModNation Racers,* a cute, almost cartoony kart racing game that comes equipped with weapons, speed boosts, and every other arcade-friendly device the developers could think to include.

But just as *LittleBigPlanet* proved to be far more than a mere platformer, *ModNation* seeks to move beyond the kiddy connotations of “kart racer” by offering deep yet accessible customization tools that will allow users to create their own characters, karts, and, most importantly, tracks—all of which can be published and shared online. We got a chance to put both our driving *and* designing skills to the test during a recent visit with developer United Front Games.

First up was character creation. Though everyone starts with the same basic model, you're absolutely spoiled for choice once you begin customizing: facial features, clothing, accessories, and decals can all be scaled, rotated, skewed, and custom colored to your heart's



↑ Love massive jumps? It's a simple process to design them into your tracks.



→ You'll be able to choose from one of four settings when you create a track: alpine village, Egyptian desert, jungle, and one yet to be announced.

content. You can even design your own stickers (which can serve any number of creative purposes) or adjust the material properties and transparency of your outfit. Want chrome pants and a see-through tank top? No problem.

The entire system isn't just deep, but *fun.* There are simple and advanced customization options for each item you add, so there's no problem creating a satisfying design even if you lack a fully conceived idea or familiarity with the process.

Start your engines

Once we perfected our driver, we got our first taste of *ModNation's* racing on a few developer-made tracks (a couple dozen will ship with the game, with more to follow as DLC) and it's definitely arcade fabulous: boost strips on the ground, random moving obstacles and hazards, shortcuts, and of course, item pickups. There are only four basic power-ups on offer—missiles, speed boosts, lightning bolts, and shock waves—but each can be upgraded for greater power or accuracy by driving through another item box.

The most important element, however, is the boost meter. Not only can it provide an on-demand speed boost, it fuels non-item-based maneuvers like the sideswipe (a full car body check) and protective shielding. You can build your boost meter by catching air and performing tricks, drafting or attacking your opponents, and drifting, which plays an integral role in *ModNation's* racing system.

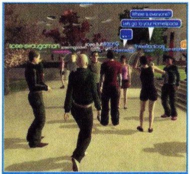
Despite all these arcadey elements, the physics-based gameplay delivers a very planted and (dare we say) visceral driving experience: various surfaces handle differently, weapons send you spinning in a believable way, and hills and corners noticeably affect speed and control. We did find it a bit too easy to drop from first to last, thanks to the insanity of all the weapons and boosting. And though the drift mechanic will take time to master, the controls feel tight and each race provided a quick, accessible blast of fun.

Right on track

After completing the developer tracks, we got a chance to build our own. Just like *LittleBigPlanet,* the user's level creation toolset is identical to the one used by the development team, so while we didn't create anything quite as cool as the insane rollercoaster of a track that they showed us, we did experience the immense depth and precision of the system.

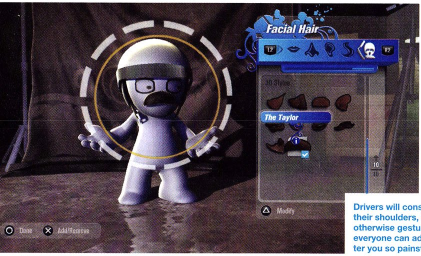
Laying down a basic course couldn't be easier: you simply drive to lay track and then have the game automatically populate the environment with pickups and obstacles. But if you want, you can adjust the exact curvature of a turn or elevation of a hill, then add shortcuts or erase whole sections to create gaps for massive jumps. With complete control over the terrain and seemingly limitless options, realizing your dream course is simple—even easier than creating levels with *LBP's* toolset.

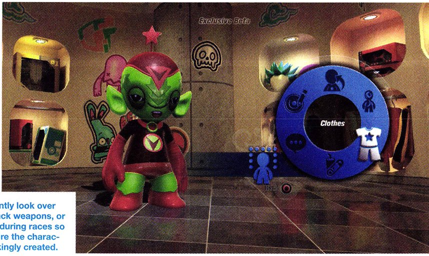
ModNation Racers may not match Sackboy's cuteness, but adopting *LittleBigPlanet's* user-generated approach was definitely a smart move. We're already eagerly anticipating playing the tracks gamers will create. | Scott Butterworth



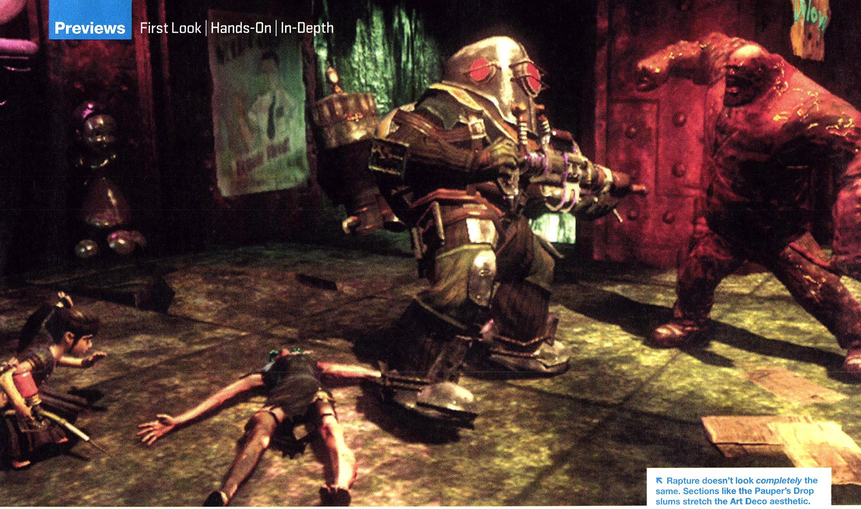
↑ The Garage to Sony's Home

In keeping with the game's focus on community and user-generated tracks and characters, *ModNation* eschews a basic Start screen in favor of a massive Home-style lobby called the Mod Spot in which you can interact with other players in real time before hopping into a race…by driving through the giant doors labeled Race Station. You can also check out top-rated tracks, attempt to set a best time on the "track of the day," or participate in any number of other activities. Think of it as your home away from Home.





Drivers will constantly look over their shoulders, track weapons, or otherwise gesture during races so everyone can admire the character you so painstakingly created.



Rapture doesn't look *completely* the same. Sections like the Pauper's Drop slums stretch the Art Deco aesthetic.

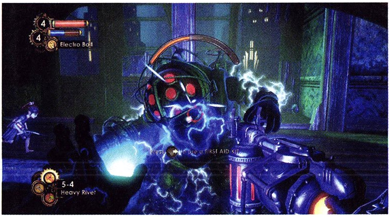
BIOSHOCK 2

The truth behind the return to Rapture

PS3 AVAILABLE: February GENRE: First-Person Shooter PUBLISHER: 2K Games
DEVELOPERS: 2K Marin, 2K Australia, 2K China, and Digital Extremes

Ever since the game was first announced, *BioShock 2* has faced a tsunami of doubt: Does a game as perfectly self-contained as the original *BioShock* really need a sequel? Will it be any fun to play as a Big Daddy? Can the development team create a worthwhile sequel without the guidance of franchise founder Ken Levine? For a long time, we could only speculate about how the new ideas would integrate into the series. Now that we've spent a few days touring the first five sections of the game, however, we can finally put those doubts to rest. This is still *BioShock.* And it's very, very good.

Until now, we only knew that the story would return to the failed underwater utopia of Rapture and star the city's first Big Daddy—a bodyguard of sorts for brainwashed little girls charged with collecting gene-enhancing materials (Adam) from the bodies of the dead (yeah, gruesome). But beyond this simple premise, the story works hard to offer all the depth, mystery, and philosophical dissection of the first game.



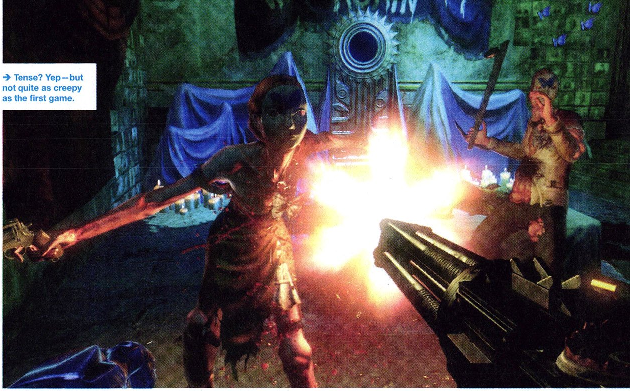
When you adopt a Little Sister, you can actually just go about your business as usual. She can't be injured and just rides on your shoulder until you need her.

Faith

After being, er, "incapacitated" for nearly 10 years, you wake to discover a Rapture without Ryan—the founder and dogmatic tyrant of the city. In his place, you find a psychiatrist named Sophia Lamb who rose to prominence through her own flavor of propaganda. And like everyone in Rapture, she has ulterior motives. Those motives are unclear, but according to returning character Brigid Tenenbaum, she's exploiting the Little Sisters to accomplish them. Naturally, it's your job to stop Lamb—with the help of a shady Southern businessman named Sinclair and a train that will eventually take you straight to your target.

And that's just a vague overview (hey, we don't want to spoil anything). Within that setup, the game hints at much larger conspiracies and complications that could build into multilayered storylines and devastating plot twists. The developers have clearly made the story a priority and are working to create a world as rich as that of the first game. This is reflected in the overall atmosphere of the game as well:

Brute Splicers charge you relentlessly, throw giant objects, refill their life at health stations, and take forever to kill.



→ Tense? Yep—but not quite as creepy as the first game.

The decrepit remains of Rapture are littered with everything from barnacles and seaweed to bursting pipes and old newspapers, as well as the usual apocalyptic graffiti and audio diaries of intriguing but ultimately doomed characters.

Death

The basic gameplay remains firmly rooted in the traditions of the last game: scavenge from room to room for much-needed supplies, fight off Splicers as they appear, and eventually take down a Big Daddy. There have, however, been a few additions. For example, once you defeat that Big Daddy, you can choose to harvest his Little Sister *or* adopt her. If you pick the latter, she can lead you to Adam-laden bodies—but as soon as she starts extracting the Adam, you'll be swarmed by Splicers.

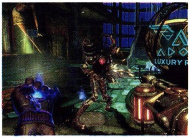
This presents a really compelling strategic opportunity since you can prepare yourself before the onslaught begins. Old plasmids—the self-prescribed genetic upgrades you can purchase using Adam—like Decoy and Cyclone Trap suddenly become your best friends. Each encounter we endured was a huge bucket of "holy crap, we're all going to die" right in the face. It's a good thing harvesting Adam is optional or else the intense but potentially frequent episodes might become too repetitive and overwhelming.

You'll also face a handful of new adversaries, most notably Big Sisters (that's right, *plural).* Fighting one of these deranged divers is a bit like battling a Big Daddy crossed with a Spider Splicer: they're incredibly fast, which means they can jump straight at you from a distance and get right up in your face before you can react. We found zapping them with Electro Bolt helped to neutralize them, but they're still absolutely terrifying.

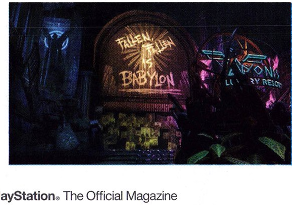
Rebirth

Being a Big Daddy doesn't feel fundamentally different from playing as Jack in the first game. You're slightly heftier, but Splicers can still drain your health fairly quickly if you're a poor shot. Even the guns feel roughly the same despite their distinctly different appearance—though being able to simultaneously wield your firearms and plasmids feels so natural that it now seems absurd that you couldn't do so in the original game.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about our time with *BioShock 2* was that it wasn't *more* surprising. It works hard to recapture what made the first game so great—and to a large extent, it succeeds—but it doesn't quite feel the same now that some of the mystery of Rapture has worn off. But who knows, maybe there are a few new twists lying just around the corner. | Scott Butterworth



Most weapons feel the same, but a few items have been added to your arsenal, including deployable mini-turrets, remote hacking tools, and rocket spears (for the spear gun).

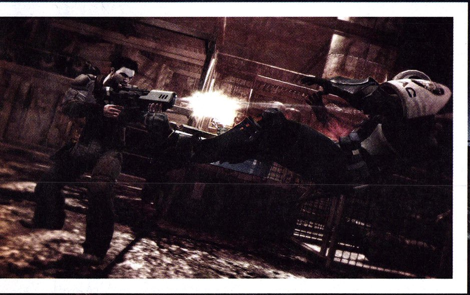


↙ Writings on the Wall

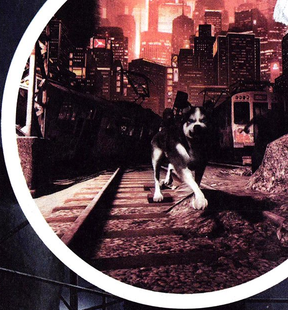
We don't want to spoil the story, but we can't let you leave empty handed, can we? Here are a few examples of the graffiti we found etched into the walls of an aging Rapture. Interpret them as you will.

"Fallen. Fallen is Babylon."
"We are but the stones to pave the way."
"We will be reborn in the womb of the ocean."
"Lamb is watching."

DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION



↑ Fun finisher: shoot out both kneecaps, then blast the begging bastard into oblivion.



↑ Mad Dog

Just to be absolutely clear, if you hear anyone speaking about Shadow as a canine, they simply mean "dog" and not a "K9" police unit. This half-wolf, half-malamute mutt was actually rejected as a K9 for being too vicious.

Take a bite out of crime

PS3 AVAILABLE: February GENRE: Action/Adventure
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai DEVELOPER: Volatile Games

It's called the testikill, and you do it by clamping your slavering jaw onto the tender groin of your foe, then shredding away with giddy abandon.

We're playing *Retribution,* the latest chapter in the *Dead to Rights* saga. Check that—it's a reboot, the folks at Namco Bandai are keen to remind us. A whole new *DTR* rebuilt from the ground up for our shiny next-gen PS3. So forget everything you knew about the first three games in this franchise. This is grittier, dirtier—and hopefully betterer. Hence the testikill.

But don't worry: vice cop Jack Slate hasn't become a perverse masticator. He's still one angry mofo, ready to rip through the shadowy underworld of Grant City. Only this time, we're promised, we'll have more of a backstory to fully understand what motivates Slate—why he became the morally questionable badass who dances sloppily on that thin line between justice and vengeance.

That dance? It's got a bunch of new moves. This is your typical third-person cover-combat game, but with a fairly smart setup that allows for a seamless interplay of guns and fist. Your weapons are mapped to the shoulder buttons and your limbs are mapped to the face buttons, so you can take a shot then immediately punch a nearby goon in the nose without having to switch between modes. In our playtest, this interface easily proved the most winning aspect of the gameplay thus far. Well, that—along with the brutal finishing moves.

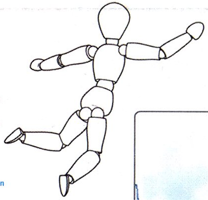
Which brings us back to the testikill. To be clear, that's *not* one of Slate's finishers. Instead, it's performed by Slate's canine companion Shadow, who you control for short stints throughout the game. When Slate is trapped in an explosion at a train station, for example, Shadow sneaks through debris, using canine senses to spot enemies lurking behind obstacles. Bark and you can draw away a single foe—or rush into the fray and take your chances. We recommend stealth, though, because then you're perfectly set up to trigger a groin-shredding finishing move.

Oh, and if you perform enough testikills, you can earn a Trophy: Scrotality. Nice. | Gary Steinman

echoshift

Doing the time warp

PS3 AVAILABLE Spring GENRE Puzzle
PUBLISHER SCEA DEVELOPER Artoon/SCE Studios Japan

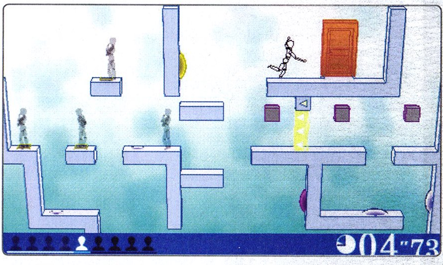


Like its predecessor—the bizarre 2008 puzzler *echochrome*—*echoshift* keeps things simple: Your character is a personality-free artist mannequin, everything looks like a basic line drawing, and the few splashes of color are only there to denote links between puzzle objects. And yet, it was instantly engaging from the moment we played it.

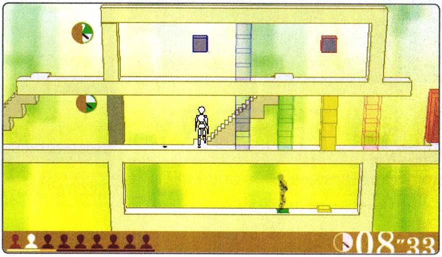
Easier to immediately grasp than *echochrome* and its bizarre 3D perspective puzzles, *echoshift* squishes its action onto a 2D plane and tasks you with climbing stairs, falling through holes, and flipping switches to open barriers, all with the goal of getting to a door at the end of each short level. The twist is that each level has a short time limit—which varies from stage to stage—and when time expires, the level rewinds. Once you're back at square one, the ghost data from your last run will stride forward and mimic your previous actions, re-solving puzzles, and opening the way forward.

So, yes, it's a lot like the Clank sections of *Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time,* with the biggest differences being the 2D gameplay and the fact that you can have up to *eight* "echoes" active at a time. More often than not, you'll need them all to clear the way so your final iteration can make it through. There's one caveat: any failure or hesitation early on can mess up your strategy later, which we learned the hard way when we *finally* made it to an end-of-level door only to be denied by the timer just a second before reaching it.

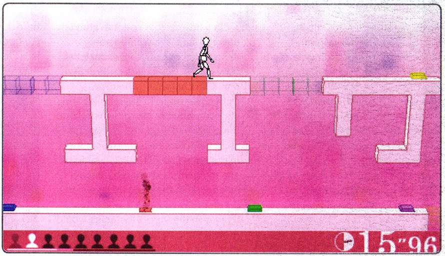
echoshift also promises plenty of gameplay longevity. Each of its 56 levels feature three different modes to play through, including one that allows you to skip a puzzle of your choice on a given level and another that requires you to find a key to open the level-end door before you can exit. Plus, seven additional levels will be available right off the bat as DLC when it ships next spring. With that much to chew through, you'll likely be too busy figuring out the puzzles to even *want* a story. | Mikel Reparaz



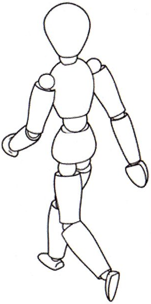
→ If you've ever wished you could be in eight places at once, this game's for you.

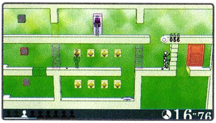


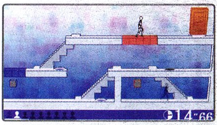
← Don't let the colorful backgrounds lull you into thinking this is a friendly puzzle game.

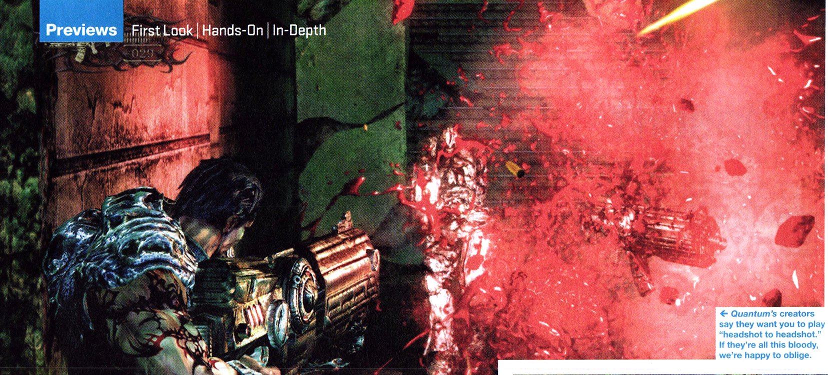


→ Just because it's 2D doesn't mean it's simple. This game is sure to bend your brain.









← *Quantum's* creators say they want you to play "headshot to headshot." If they're all this bloody, we're happy to oblige.

→Filena can't be controlled directly in single-player, but you can try out her abilities in multiplayer.

QUANTUM THEORY

Proof that Japanese shooters are alive and killing

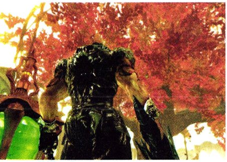
PS3 AVAILABLE Spring GENRE Action Shooter PUBLISHER Tecmo DEVELOPER Team Tachyon

Makoto Shibata wants you to know that Japanese games are not dead. Shibata is the director of *Quantum Theory,* Tecmo's upcoming PlayStation 3 cover-based third-person shooter—a genre that's more associated with U.S. than Japanese development houses. "This is an attempt to create another title as a pillar for Tecmo, to complement *Dead or Alive* and *Ninja Gaiden,"* adds assistant director Daisuke Inari.

Tecmo's Team Tachyon is working hard to accomplish that goal. *Quantum Theory* plays a lot like other over-the-shoulder third-person shooters, but the main difference in this game is that cover won't save you all the time.

"In a normal third-person shooter, cover is safe. We wanted something different," says level designer Tsuyoshi Iuchi. Players control Syd, the main character, who moves from cover point to cover point and shoots monsters along the way. But the cover in the game can change shape, appear, or disappear in the middle of a firefight. While we didn't see the game's shifting battlefield evidenced in the first two levels of the demo we played, it was on full display in the third. Obstacles would grow right in front of us as we ran for cover and then disappear as we fought. At one point, a bridge we were taking cover on began to rotate, giving enemies an open line of fire at us. The key to survival is to move constantly—there's no sitting behind cover and killing enemies by attrition.

While Syd moves from cover to cover, his partner Filena, will run ahead and engage enemies. Filena possesses completely different abilities from Syd and won't be a playable character in the single-player campaign—sorry, no co-op here. However, Syd can summon Filena with the touch of a button and "aim" her to direct her attack. If aimed behind enemies, she'll attack them and drive them from cover. If aimed above, she'll land in their midst and disrupt their plans. If she encounters an enemy along the way, Filena will dish out a slow-motion melee attack that kills all but the toughest enemies with a single powerful hit. | Ryan Winterhalter



↑ The game starts out gray and brown, but it slowly gets more colorful as it progresses.

↖ Under the Influence

Character designer Hiroyuki Yazaki pointed out that the game takes its artistic inspiration from a wide variety of sources. Enemy design, for example, owes a great deal to the rubber-suited monsters in Japanese movies and TV shows that many on the team grew up watching, while the architecture of the game was heavily influenced by Art Nouveau and traditional architecture in Barcelona, Spain.

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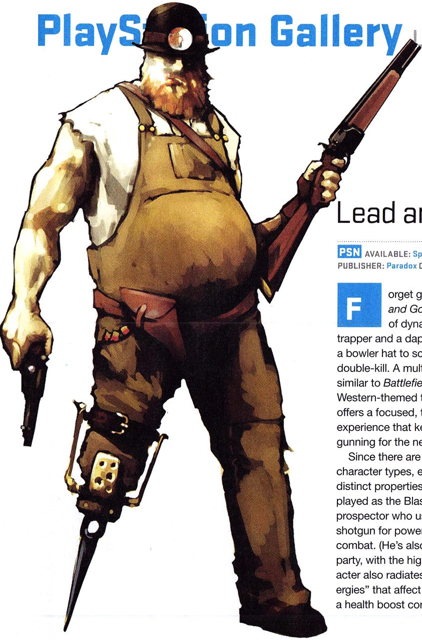
PlayStation Gallery

Updates, sneak peeks, works-in-progress



Lead and Gold

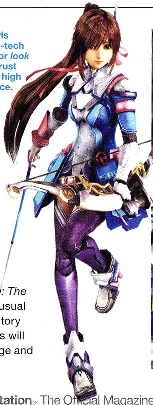
PSN AVAILABLE: Spring GENRE: Shooter
PUBLISHER: Paradox DEVELOPER: Fat Shark

Forget grenades—in *Lead and Gold,* we tossed a stick of dynamite at a fur-capped trapper and a dapper deputy sporting a bowler hat to score a satisfying double-kill. A multiplayer PSN title similar to *Battlefield 1943,* this Western-themed third-person shooter offers a focused, team-based experience that keeps you constantly gunning for the next objective.

Since there are only four different character types, each one has very distinct properties and skills. We played as the Blaster, a crusty old prospector who uses a double-barrel shotgun for powerful close-range combat. (He's also the tank of the party, with the highest HP.) Each character also radiates two different "Synergies" that affect nearby teammates: a health boost common to all, and a status buff specific to class. With six multiplayer and two offline-only maps, *Lead and Gold* tosses you straight into the fast-paced action. Whether it's running to defend a sack of gold or bringing a powder keg to the enemy base, each round promises solid cooperative gameplay and satisfyingly bloody combat. | David Murphy

↖ We're pretty certain that "torn sleeveless shirt with overalls" is going to be the hot fashion look for spring.

↘ Sure, girls sporting hi-tech battle armor *look* cute. But trust us: *mucho* high maintenance.



Star Ocean: The Last Hope International

PS3 AVAILABLE: February GENRE: RPG PUBLISHER: Square Enix DEVELOPER: tri-Ace

The fourth iteration of tri-Ace's epic space opera, *Star Ocean: The Last Hope International* is finally making its way to PS3. As usual for the series, you can expect an engrossing (and lengthy) story stretching across strange new worlds and new civilizations. JRPG fans will appreciate the available choice to utilize the original Japanese language and battle menu options. | David Murphy

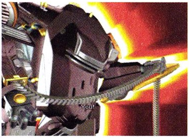
I am justice!

↘ When you're piloting a giant mech, you can pretty much proclaim yourself anything you want.

Sakura Wars

PS2 AVAILABLE: Spring GENRE: Strategy RPG PUBLISHER: NIS America DEVELOPER: Sega/Red

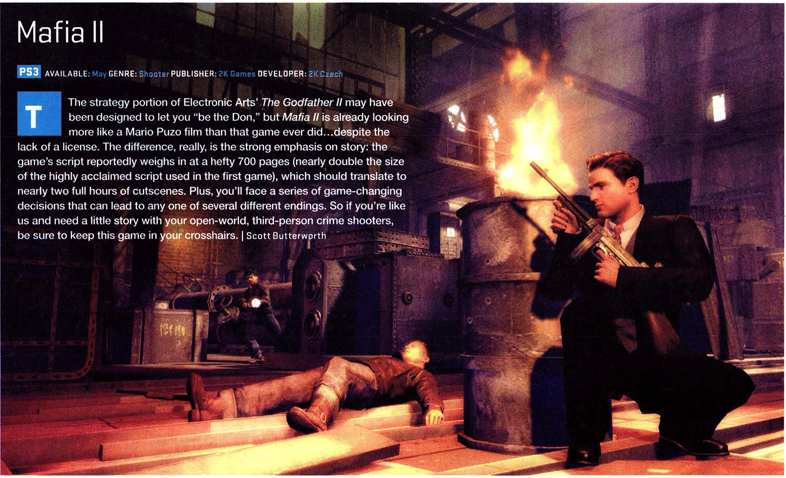
Add together: two parts relationship sim, two parts Mech strategy, and one part Broadway Musical coordinator, and you've got *Sakura Wars,* a PS2 game that's based on the popular (in Japan) anime series. When you're not entrenched in free roaming strategic battles with giant robots, you're strengthening bonds with your six lady performers/vicious-demon-slayers. It's kind of like *Persona,* but with giant robots. | David Murphy



Mafia II

PS3 AVAILABLE: May GENRE: Shooter PUBLISHER: 2K Games DEVELOPER: 2K Czech

The strategy portion of Electronic Arts' *The Godfather II* may have been designed to let you "be the Don," but *Mafia II* is already looking more like a Mario Puzo film than that game ever did...despite the lack of a license. The difference, really, is the strong emphasis on story: the game's script reportedly weighs in at a hefty 700 pages (nearly double the size of the highly acclaimed script used in the first game), which should translate to nearly two full hours of cutscenes. Plus, you'll face a series of game-changing decisions that can lead to any one of several different endings. So if you're like us and need a little story with your open-world, third-person crime shooters, be sure to keep this game in your crosshairs. | Scott Butterworth



→ Frankly, we can't wait to find out what the heck's happening in this screenshot.

GRAN T

Polyphony Digital's long-awaited driving opus hits the home stretch. Here's everything you need to know about the PS3's most realistic racing game.

by Evan Shamoon

URISMO 5

10 years in conception

5 years in development

Over 1000 cars

Infinitely beautiful

The single reason you own a PS3

↑ The GT-R is a triumph of hi-tech over the laws of physics.

↑ The Gallardo: so sweet to drive, so hard to pronounce.

"Since its debut in 1997 as the Ultimate Driving Simulator, the series has consistently redefined the peak of realistic racing action on a home console."

Massive Damage

Those paying close attention know that *Gran Turismo 5* will feature car damage for the first time in the series. Deformation damage will be a factor on all cars in the game, while racecars will go a step further with doors and side panels that can tear completely off.

What the game won't include is the kind of epic crashes found in games like *Burnout*. Expect precisely zero explosions, and it's still unclear whether or not you'll be able to "roll" vehicles. The reason behind all of this, of course, is that the auto manufacturers involved simply don't want their cars being totaled in the game—*Gran Turismo* is just a bit *too* real, and having prospective customers flip and demolish their vehicles is, in their minds at least, not very good marketing. (This is, of course, the same reason you don't see real-life car models in games like *Burnout* and *Grand Theft Auto*).

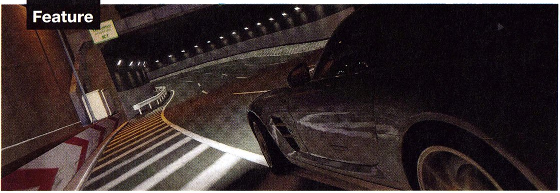
Go Time

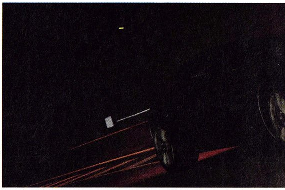
It's Monday morning. The clock hasn't yet struck 8 a.m., and we're sitting in an office. This would be a problem, were it not for the fact that we're playing *Gran Turismo 5* with the game's associate producer Chris Hinojosa-Miranda in Sony's Santa Monica, Calif., studios.

The unusually rainy Monday morning drive over here from Los Angeles had its own bit of highway turbulence: attempting to stop at a traffic light, we watched in what seemed like slow motion as the Honda ahead of us suddenly struck the Ford in front of it. The two drivers stepped out of their respective vehicles into the pouring rain—and to everyone's surprise, merely exchanged pleasantries after determining that no damage had been done to either vehicle.

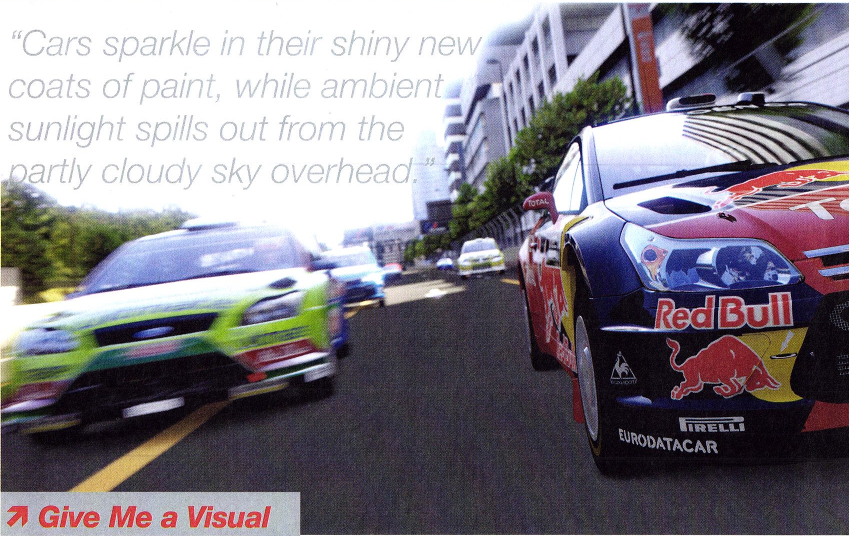
For the purposes of our metaphor at hand, this is the *old Gran Turismo*. The *new Gran Turismo*—the fifth in the series, the first *complete* game for PlayStation 3, and the one we're playing here today—doesn't let the car drive off quite so unscathed: a brand new damage modeling system is making its debut, meaning that cars get dented, deformed, and otherwise banged up. And that's just the half of it.

Since its debut in 1997 as the Ultimate Driving Simulator, the series has consistently redefined the peak of realistic racing action on a home console. With *Gran Turismo 5,* developer Polyphony Digital looks to bring the series to the next level with full 1080p HD graphics, damage modeling, and a host of online options. And with the studio's impeccable track record, it's genuinely difficult to imagine this scenario playing out any other way. *Gran Turismo* is the racing fan's dream racing game. *Gran Turismo* games sell consoles, and *GT5* is next in line.





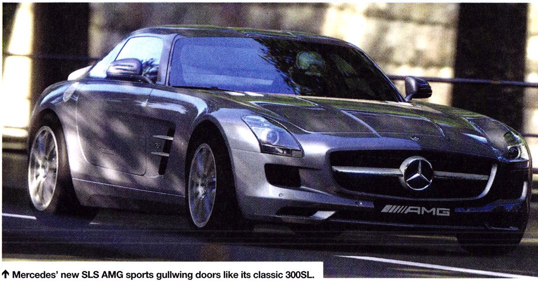
> "Cars sparkle in their shiny new coats of paint, while ambient sunlight spills out from the partly cloudy sky overhead."



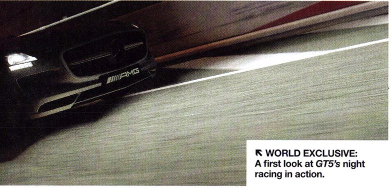
↗ Give Me a Visual

If there's one thing we've come to expect from *Gran Turismo* games, it's spectacular graphics: as previously announced, *GT5* will run in full 1080p HD at a buttery smooth 60 fps. Weather effects, as well as night racing for all tracks, will be making their first appearance. A new cockpit view is being included in the game, which is no small undertaking: this means that every one of the game's 1,000-plus cars will be modeled both inside and out, with full dashboard displays. This is serious business, people.

While a complete track list is still unconfirmed, we do know that Tokyo Route 246, the Daytona International Speedway, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and the Nürburgring will all be playable. Likewise, the Dunsfold Park airstrip, located in the United Kingdom (and the test track for the British automotive television show *Top Gear),* will also be included in the game. Rally racing is yet another traditional part of the *Gran Turismo* experience, so there'll be several off-road tracks in *GT5* as well.



↑ Mercedes' new SLS AMG sports gullwing doors like its classic 300SL.



↖ WORLD EXCLUSIVE: A first look at *GT5's* night racing in action.

Driver's Ed

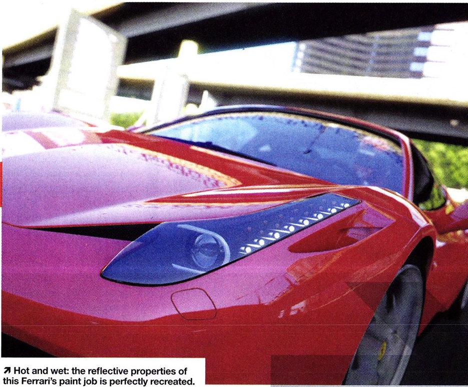
Barreling around the game's Tokyo Route 246 city track at 130 mph in our Subaru Impreza WRC, it's tough not to feel a new sense of amazement at the sheer level of detail that Polyphony has infused into its latest creation. Cars sparkle in their shiny new coats of paint, while ambient sunlight spills out from the partly cloudy sky overhead, reflecting with convincing realism off of their gleaming surfaces. Each and every building we drive past verges on photorealistic, and is modeled off of a real-life counterpart (including one of Sony's own), right down to the windows and entranceways. Closely cropped hedges line the streets and perfectly manicured lawns add a dash of green to the environments here and there. It feels just like driving around Tokyo at insanely high speeds, which is exactly the point.

The feel of the game is not unlike past titles in the series, insofar as driving like an idiot will have you burning rubber, spinning out, and pulling up the rear. You need to use your brakes, but more importantly, you need to learn to drive well enough that you can lay off of them: our lap times improved dramatically after we re-learn this lesson on *Gran Turismo 5's* unforgiving tracks. The sense of speed is impressive; other games are faster, of course—including but not limited to the *Burnouts* and *Need for Speeds* of the gaming world. But *GT5,* in its full HD glory, makes you feel like you're driving a *real* car in *real* life, which when compared to driving the car parked in your driveway, makes it feel a whole hell of a lot faster (particularly in traffic-clogged Los Angeles during a rainy Monday morning rush-hour commute).

Our on-the-fly driving class also introduces us to the game's new damage modeling system in short order. After a few minutes of defensive driving, our first high-speed collision seems to engender the same good fortune as that of the lucky bastard commuting ahead of us this morning: no harm, no foul. Moments later, however, we take a turn a little too quickly, and find ourselves French kissing the divider. Our door dents inward, and then pops wide open, swinging in the wind as we accelerate back into action. Several minutes and quite a few more crashes later, the front bumper is hanging off our Impreza by a thread, and we're unable to break the 50 mph barrier due to excessive engine damage.

It's going to be a long day at the races, and a proper prelude to a long first portion of 2010 spent waiting for more *GT5* seat time.

TAL
Red Bull
CITROËN
SPORT
733 EGZ 78
le coq sportif



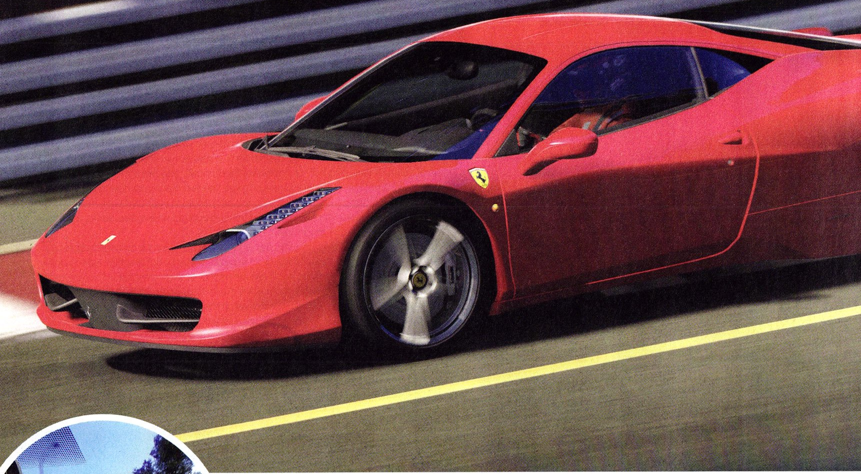
↗ Hot and wet: the reflective properties of this Ferrari's paint job is perfectly recreated.

GT Online

While everyone at Sony is being very quiet about the details of *GT5's* online modes, we do know this: everything in the game's online mode is being built from the ground up. We do know that the mode will support up to 16 players, and based on what was in *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue,* we can do a bit of extrapolating as well. Players will most likely be able to earn reward money from each race and purchase new cars, and we already know that save data from both *Prologue* and *Gran Turismo* PSP (including money earned and cars purchased) can be carried over to *GT5*.

Everyone we spoke to at Sony, from creator Kazunori Yamauchi to the Sony PR team, seems to be hinting at the fact that the team has some huge things planned for *GT5's* online play. Alas, we'll have to stay tuned for more specific details.

> "While an exact number has yet to be determined, the latest word on the street is that Gran Turismo 5 will feature over 1,000 cars."



Car Wars: A New Hope

GT5 is going to let you drive cars. Lots of them. While an exact number has yet to be determined, the latest word on the street is that *Gran Turismo 5* will feature over 1,000 cars; 170 of these cars will be specially designed models with more detailed interiors that show damage after wrecks (as opposed to exterior damage only). Lamborghini and Bugatti will make their first appearance in the series, along with the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG and Ferrari's 458 Italia. A host of hybrid and electric vehicles, including a vehicle from Tesla, are also slated to make the cut; while we're not sure how they're going to compete with high-octane gas-guzzlers, kudos for Polyphony for not forgetting about the green.

This rather staggering number becomes even more unbelievable when you learn what goes into creating each and every car in the game. First is an extensive photo shoot, which has several team members flying to wherever the car in question might be located (which is often halfway around the world from Japan), picking, poking, prodding, and photographing it from every conceivable angle over the course of several days.

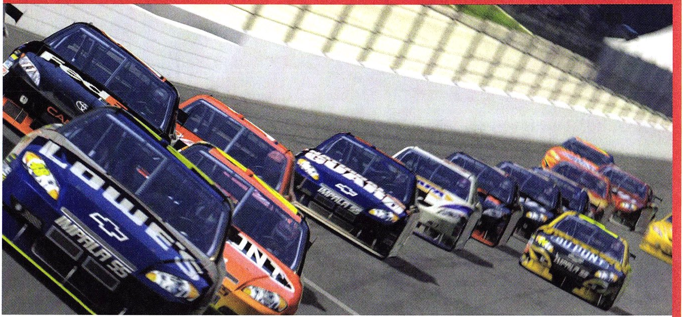
Once all this data is captured, the team returns to Tokyo, where one of Polyphony's ace artists is tasked with modeling and texturing each of the cars, right down to the tiniest detail. The specs for the car are then integrated into the game, and tweaked to ensure consistency. And here's the kicker: each car takes anywhere from *three to six months* to complete (*not* including the photo shoot). Which, for those keeping score at home, is anywhere from two to four times longer than it takes a pregnant cat to birth an entire litter of kittens. Each car is considered a work of art by the team, and is treated as such.

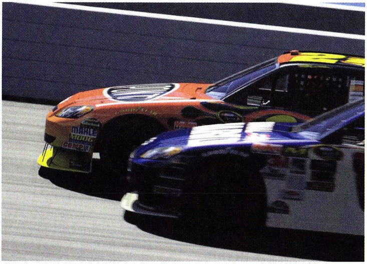
↗ Drive it

Here are just a handful of the rides you can experience in *GT5:*

Amuse S2000 GTI Turbo
Blitz Dunlop ER34 '07
HKS CT230R '08
Audi R8 4.2 FSI R tronic '07
Ford Focus RS WRC 07 '08
Nissan Fairlady Z '08
Mazda RX-7 Spirit R Type A '02
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X GSR '07
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IV GSR '96

New Modes Tested





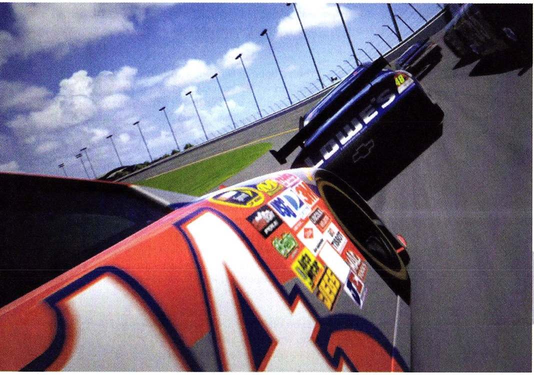
For the first time ever in the series, both NASCAR and—as exclusively revealed to PTOM—Indy (IRL) cars and tracks will be included in *Gran Turismo 5*.

The collaboration with NASCAR came about when EA's license for the sport ran dry, and the organization approached Sony about handing the NASCAR keys over to Yamauchi and his team. The result is that two of the biggest names in racing will be joining forces for *GT5*—the mind reels at the sheer cross-promotional potential.

More interesting, however, is the fact that the game will allow users to drive NASCAR cars off the track and onto city courses, as well as race them against other types of vehicles. "It was very much a question of 'where do we go next with the sport,' and I think we're helping them explore the possibilities in *GT5*," says associate producer Chris Hinojosa-Miranda.

While the Indy cars weren't available for test drives during our playtest, we did get the opportunity to experience the Indianapolis race track in both a stock and tuned version of the Nissan 370Z. It's a track/vehicle combo that *Gran Turismo* fans should be intimately familiar with by the time you read this as it comprises the *GT5* Time Trial Challenge demo that hit PSN on December 17.

Racing enthusiasts have until January 25 to try their hands at the two time trials in the demo—one each for the stock and tuned 370Z. The driver with the best combined time for both trials will receive roundtrip airfare and hotel accommodations for two to the Indy 500, as well as two all-access passes for Carb Day, which includes the final Indy 500 practice, pit stop competition, concerts, all-access passes to the Victory Lane for pre- and post-race celebrations, and more. You must be over 18 to be eligible for the competition, but the demo is accessible to all and will remain playable after the January 25 cut-off date for the Time Trial Challenge. So start downloading and get driving!



Roadside Chat

Kazunori Yamauchi won't release a game until it's ready. The creator of the *Gran Turismo* series has earned that right by consistently delivering the premiere videogame racing experience for PlayStation. That's why, when he told us during a chat from Polyphony's Tokyo headquarters, that the ideas for *GT5* were initiated back in 2001 but "it took just under 10 years to get to the point where we have met our standards," it's easy to believe him. Now in the home stretch on *Gran Turismo 5,* Yamauchi shares his thoughts about the crossroads between automobiles and videogame technology, and his insights on the series' venerable history.

↑ Yamauchi thinks the Ford GT is the most beautiful car—so much so that he owns one.

Gran Turismo has always focused on the most realistic driving experience, which is great for hardcore gamers and driving enthusiasts. But what about the casual gamer?

That's an issue we've been carefully considering since the first *GT.* In *GT5 Prologue* we actually set a standard mode for the casual gamer and a professional mode for the car enthusiast, and we're always making the effort to find that balance.

We have these two modes because we want people to enjoy the game and have fun, but at the same time we want something that actually works properly for people who are interested in cars. We are sincere about the subject.

Speaking of _Prologue,_ what did you learn about online racing that you applied to _GT5?_

I already had the image of the online features that would go into the game back in 2001, and of course not everything in that image is completed yet. *Prologue* was basically everything we could release by the time it came out, and we're still working on it.

On the PS3, we don't have a rich online system like an Xbox Live, and each title has to create its own online system and features. But *because* we build from scratch, there are a lot of possibilities that are not in other online games out there right now.

Was damage modeling something you always wanted to be a part of the gameplay experience?

There are two answers to that. One is that we are trying to match the expectations of our audience. The other: We had a technical curiosity about what would happen if we tried to do it. It creates an added bit of tension to the game because players can't make as many mistakes.

_GT5_ is undeniably gorgeous. Have far have you pushed the PS3?

The 60 fps we have achieved in *GT5* is at the very limits of the PS3, but I believe there's still headroom to produce better images in the game. But as with the music and movie industries, there is a time where you will come to a limit or a saturation point for the technology, where the genre will become matured. And when those technical achievements have been completed, the individuality and uniqueness of each title will make the difference. I think this will probably come within the next 10 years.

Do you ever worry about having too many cars in the game?

I don't think we'll ever hit the point where there are too many cars in the game. Throughout the history of the automobile, I believe there are about 30,000 different cars out there. Some *GT* users pick up our game just because there's one car that they like in the game!

For each release of the series, is there one key innovation that you are most proud of?

For the first *GT,* just the fact that we were able to release a driving simulator into the world was a major accomplishment. At the time, we didn't know if it would actually take off. For *GT2,* the challenge was to get as many cars as possible into the game. The gaming industry also gained a connection with the automotive world, and I think that was a big innovation.

And in *GT3,* we had a new hardware platform in the PS2. For a system that plays games on an SD television, it's a very good system. *GT4* was our second PS2 game and our mission was to streamline the systems of the game.

GT5 Prologue and *GT5,* the challenge was to make the game high-definition and compatible with online. We established the style of *Gran Turismo* in 1997 when the first game came out, and I think for *GT5* it is our mission to change that style and build upon it.

You've done design work with the car industry on the Citroën concept car [right] and the Nissan GT-R's multifunction display. Is this something you enjoy?

I do like working with real cars very much and to have the opportunity to apply our knowledge and knowhow is very exciting. It's something that we would definitely like to continue.

Speaking of the automobile industry, there's so much change happening with hybrid and electric technologies. Do you think this signals the end of performance automobiles?

I don't think there will be an end to high-performance cars. This is something we instinctively love as human beings. I just think the cars in the future will be much more efficient.

If you could only drive one car for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Ford GT. It's the most beautiful car, I think.

Extra Features

GT5 will be putting the PlayStation Eye camera to use: using some sophisticated algorithms, the game will actually track the user's head movement, allowing them to look out the side or back windows for a better view of the action. For those with multiple displays (and, ahem, multiple PS3s), it will also support up to three displays working in unison for the ultimate in driving realism. Last but not least, users will be able to automatically output HD replays to YouTube with the press of a button—how cool is that?

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sparco
Arai
PlayStation
CITROËN

THE VERY BEST

The **SHINING STARS OF 2009** step back into the spotlight to accept our awards for the greatest games of the year

Man of the Year

Nathan Drake
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

WHAT WE SAID "Nathan Drake is the ideal modern day action hero: daring and humble, defiant and bashful, tenacious and irresponsible. He's also good humored, a good shot, and good looking." **NOV 09 ISSUE, 5 STARS**

WHY WE STILL LOVE HIM Nathan Drake might have a larger-than-life Hollywood personality, but he's also an all-around everyman caught up in an intense adventure that'll knock your socks off. The high-flying action mixed with gorgeous cutscenes gives us that tingly feel-good sensation we get from watching a summer blockbuster movie. We don't just want to *be* Nathan Drake—we want to be with him during his daring exploits just to say that we were along for the ride. So we'll keep on shooting and climbing and climbing and shooting to relive the adrenaline rush Drake delivers time and time again.

IN HIS OWN WORDS "I don't fumble, I improvise. I'm, uh, adaptable."

WINNER!
GAME OF THE YEAR

Soldier of the Year

Captain Price
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

WHAT WE SAID "He's more than a man of action—he's a man of patience, perseverance, and sacrifice. After spending five years in not just a prison, but the friggin' gulag, he could have gone home and rested. Instead, he chomped down on a new cigar, donned his trademark hat and immediately set about preventing World War III. Thanks, Captain Price. Again."
JAN 10 ISSUE, 5 STARS

WHY HIS STRUGGLE STILL MATTERS

Captain Price is lost without his squad. Sadly he suffers that fate twice at the hands of double-crossing, power-hungry soldiers on all sides of an international conflict that spans two games. Despite the bitterness we feel on Price's behalf, we learn a lot from him to take to *Modern Warfare 2's* multiplayer mode. Understanding the importance of supporting the squad creates a sense of camaraderie between the thousands of players playing the game. We cling to our squadmates with the understanding that as awesome as our perks and customizable weapons are, *we're* only as good as the guy watching our back. That feeling of connectedness keeps us coming back to *Modern Warfare 2* for more.

HIS BIG COMEBACK After we infiltrate a gulag to rescue Captain Price, the badass rescues *himself* by choking a captor with the very handcuffs they used to restrain him. Then he knocks you down and pulls your own gun on you.

DIRTIEST DESPERADOES

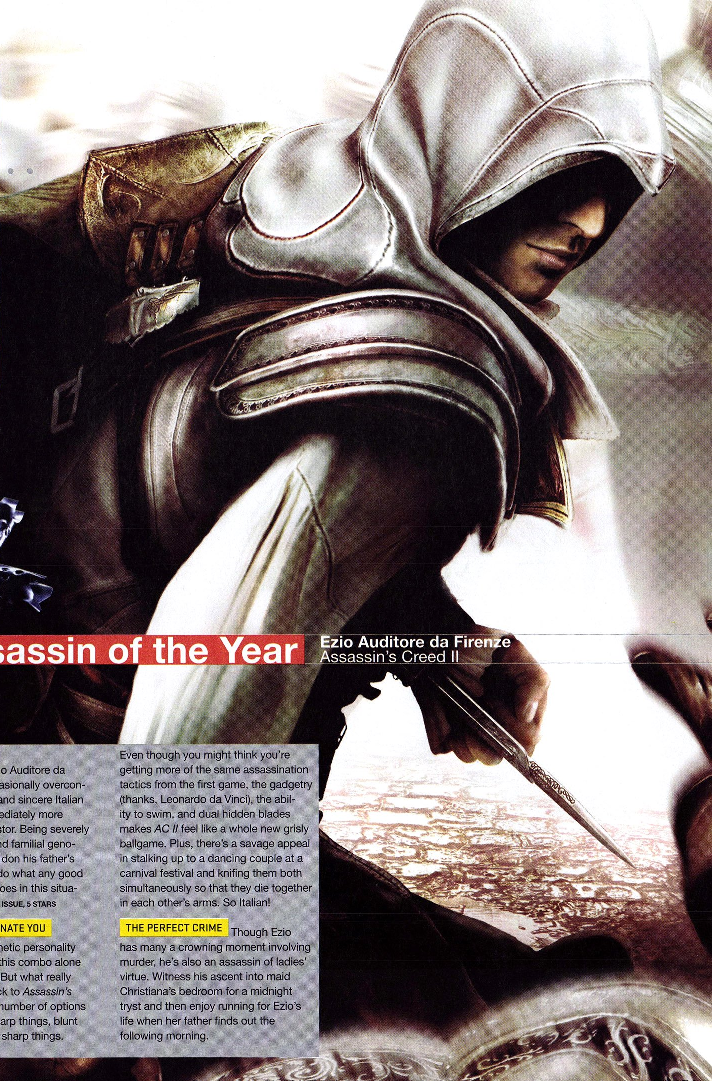
MCCALL BROTHERS
Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood
Ray, Thomas, and William have all the trademarks of the classic desperado: a seemingly unquenchable thirst for revenge, treasure, and women—as well as a weird relationship with the Bible.

FAB FATALITIES

EMILY SPENCER
Bionic Commando
Quality time is being murdered and implanted in your hubby's arm.

RUBI'S CROSSBOW-HEADSHOTS
WET
It's a lousy, but sexy, way to go.

HELICOPTERS
50 Cent: Blood on the Sand
Buy travel insurance: every single chopper in the game explodes.



Assassin of the Year

Ezio Auditore da Firenze
Assassin's Creed II

WHAT WE SAID "Ezio Auditore da Firenze, a brash, occasionally overconfident, yet charming and sincere Italian aristocrat who's immediately more likable than his ancestor. Being severely allergic to injustice and familial genocide, Ezio decides to don his father's assassin's robe and do what any good videogame badass does in this situation: get even." HOL 09 ISSUE, 5 STARS

HOW HE'LL ASSASSINATE YOU

Ezio has both a magnetic personality and deadly cutlery—this combo alone is enough to slay us. But what really keeps us coming back to *Assassin's Creed II* is the sheer number of options for killing people—sharp things, blunt things, and still more sharp things. Even though you might think you're getting more of the same assassination tactics from the first game, the gadgetry (thanks, Leonardo da Vinci), the ability to swim, and dual hidden blades makes *AC II* feel like a whole new grisly ballgame. Plus, there's a savage appeal in stalking up to a dancing couple at a carnival festival and knifing them both simultaneously so that they die together in each other's arms. So Italian!

THE PERFECT CRIME Though Ezio has many a crowning moment involving murder, he's also an assassin of ladies' virtue. Witness his ascent into maid Christiana's bedroom for a midnight tryst and then enjoy running for Ezio's life when her father finds out the following morning.

Villain of the Year

The Joker
Batman: Arkham Asylum

WHAT WE SAID "You'll hang on to his every line, anticipating every potentially deadly encounter just to hear what comical, crazy missive comes out of his mouth next." OCT 09 ISSUE, 5 STARS

WHY IT'S GOOD TO BE BAD

Though Batman himself has a lot to offer as the main character in his *Arkham Asylum* outing, The Joker steals the show. The villain's standout performance given by actor Mark Hamill with incredibly witty dialogue written by comic book scribe Paul Dini, put the green-haired bad guy head and shoulders above the rest of the cast. The Joker is so awesome, we didn't even mind dying occasionally just to hear his voice again during the sprawling storyline. But it doesn't stop there—players have the chance to play as The Joker in several unlockable Challenge Maps exclusive to the PlayStation 3. As Joker, you can thwart Arkham Asylum guards and set up all kinds of kooky traps. The Joker's gameplay is definitely a good way to be bad.

BAT-TAUNTING 101 "Oh, what'd you sneak in with ya, Bats? C'mon, tell me, tell me… Batarangs? Bat-Claws? Oh… Bat SNACKS?"

SHOCKING STEREOTYPES

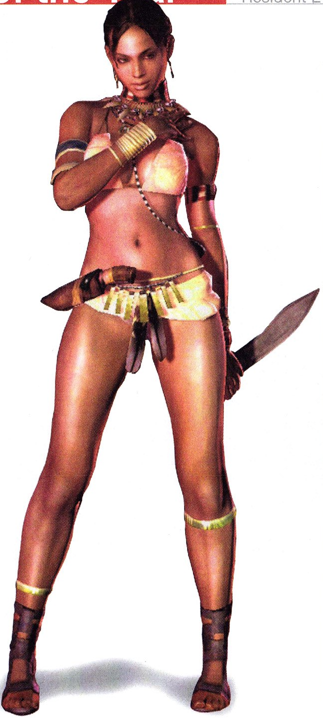
LOADSCREEN BOOB JIGGLING
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2
This offends our tender male sensibilities, but we can't deny that it's the best use of Sixaxis control yet.

FLOSS AS CLOTHING
X-Blades
Ayumi's attire is a blatant attempt to distract from the game's horribleness. We approve.

MIDNIGHT SHOW DLC
The Saboteur
Makes up for all the time we wasted trying to make the *Tomb Raider* nude code work.

Outfit of the Year

Sheva Alomar's Tribal Outfit
Resident Evil 5



WHAT WE SAID "Sheva isn't just beautiful, she's smart and tough."
MARCH 09 ISSUE, 5 STARS

HOW SHE KEEPS IT SEXY

Sheva Alomar's addition to Chris Redfield's one-man-zombie-fighting team is probably the highlight of the *Resident Evil 5* experience. She's a second playable character for your buddy, she barely needs any babysitting, and for once there's somebody who can save Chris' ass when a mean mob of zombies goes after him. Her profound connection to the victims in the story also serves as fitting motivation as Chris and Sheva fight their way through every kind of T-virus, C-virus, and Progenitor virus mutation to get to the bottom of Umbrella Corporation's latest evil plot. Plus, she's *hot.* The Tribal Outfit unlockable the game offers only doubles Sheva's sex appeal. Score it for Story mode by finding all 30 BSAA emblems or for Mercs mode by completing Stage 6 with an A ranking. A tad challenging, but worth it. Because what's the point of having a beautiful, smart, international leading lady if you don't let her show off all her, uh, cultural talents?

WORD TO THE WISE—ACCESSORIZE

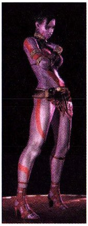
The Mercs mode Tribal Outfit comes with a longbow that has infinite ammo. The pleasure you get from bulls-eying zombies with it almost equals the visual joy of the war paint Sheva sports on her beautiful, bronze shoulders.

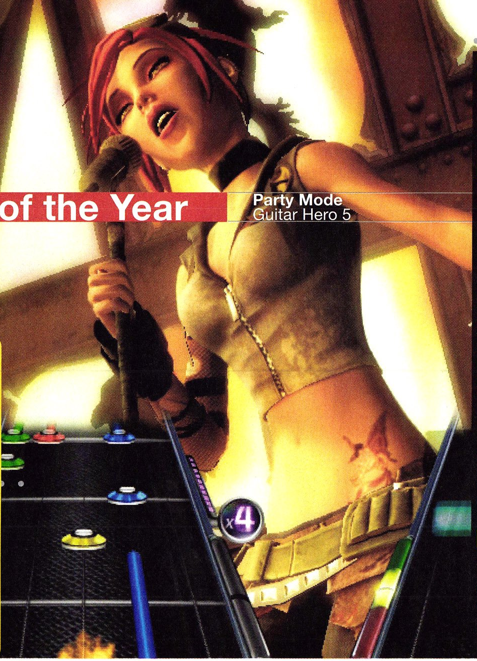
FAVE FASHIONS

BOB
Tekken 6
Dude, did your mom dress you? *smack*

GHOST
Modern Warfare 2
Because painting a skull over your facemask is just asking for trouble.

HERO
Half-Minute Hero
Nothing's ballsier than fighting in the buff.





Party of the Year

Party Mode
Guitar Hero 5

WHAT WE SAID "Party play allows anyone to jump in or drop out mid-song or change their instrument or difficulty without ever stopping the song (and it works brilliantly)." **NOV 09 ISSUE, 4.5 STARS**

WHY YOU WANNA BE INVITED

Peer pressure is a sad side effect of the world's hottest parties. Between fetes from middle school to middle age, you'll encounter such unspoken expectations as showing up in the best outfit, having the hottest date, and consuming the most beverages in the shortest amount of time. *Guitar Hero 5's* Party Mode alleviates the nasty peer pressure hangover by lightening up on the competitive edge without dulling the music. So whether you have a hard time with drums or have mastered the drums on hard, nobody will ever snub you at a *GH5* party with Party Mode in play. With no limits to which songs you can play and no shame in stopping mid-song to switch difficulty, Party Mode is one gala you won't want to miss. Even better, getting new people to rock sans anxiety means you can play again and again with different bandmates every time.

PARTY ETIQUETTE The only way you can disappoint during Party Mode is spilling your beverage all over your instrument. Refrain from setting your drink down within two feet of yourself while playing and pause the game when you need a sip instead of flailing wildly for it mid-song. Cheers!

KILLER KISSES

EDDIE AND OPHELIA
Brütal Legend
Finally—it took the whole game to happen!

EZIO AND CRISTINA
Assassin's Creed II
Climbing in the window is romantic, climbing out is not.

GREY WARDEN AND ANYBODY
Dragon Age: Origins
No kiss is as sweet as the one you earn through leveling relationship stats.

Weapon of the Year

Pistol
Borderlands

WHAT WE SAID "Best of all, scoring a critical hit with special ammo like flame bullets will set your foe on fire and wear down his health." **HOL 09 ISSUE, 4 STARS**

WHY BIGGER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER

The myriad weapons in *Borderlands* all have their strengths and weaknesses, but the gun with the least downside is the handy pistol—making it the star of the game's extensive multiplayer component. They're not the biggest or the strongest, but pistols provide the perfect balance between quick draws and hefty stopping power—which can be the difference between a successful mission and a rage quit. The desperado world of *Borderlands* is awash with all kinds of customized hand-cannons, so when you find the right one, hold onto it. You'll be picking off Skags while all those rocket-launcher-jarheads are still frantically trying to reload.

HISTORY LESSON Cool people use pistols. Examples: Clint Eastwood, James Bond, Han Solo, and Revolver Ocelot (kind of).

Team of the Year

Arsenal F. C.
FIFA Soccer 10

WHAT WE SAID "A perfectly conceived, wonderfully executed sports sim."

DEC 09 ISSUE, 4.5 STARS

WHY IT WASN'T TOTTENHAM

Thanks to the Adidas Live Season Update introduced in *FIFA 09,* Arsenal stands out as one of the better teams players have access to for online *FIFA* matches—we just love their wide-open attack-minded flair. It can be frustrating (especially if you're a Tottenham Hotspur fan) to have your stats handed to you, but at the same time the realism of the Live Update speaks to the quality of realism the *FIFA* series achieved in *09* and perfected for *10*. This realism is carried through the rest of the game, right down to the human uncertainty factor in even the most basic of tackles. If you don't like the savage reality of England's Premier League while playing online, though, you can always indulge in a bit of fantasy-tinged realism in *FIFA 10* with the revamped Training Mode, where you can design your own plays, step-overs, dummy rolls, and other wrinkles of the beautiful game.

FUN FACTS Arsenal was both the first team in the world to use shirt numbers during a game (in 1927) and the first team to play a live broadcast game against the Arsenal Reserves (aired September 16, 1937).

STUPENDOUS STUNTS

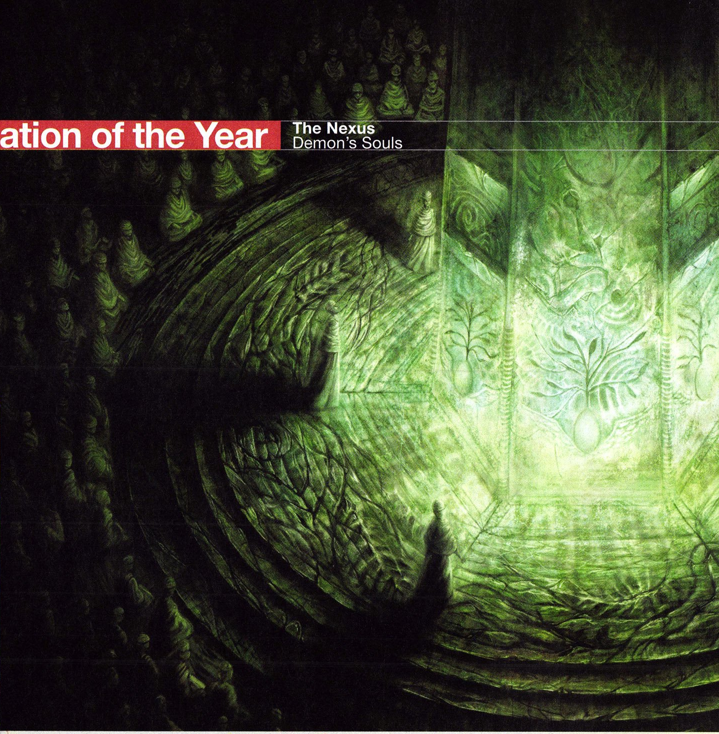
DUAL-WIELDING KNEE SLIDES
WET
Rubi just looks hot while she's doing it...the sliding and shooting, we mean.

PEOPLE TOSSING
inFamous
Throwing people off buildings is just plain hilarious.

ELBOW-DROPPING TANKS
Prototype
You know you would if you could.

Destination of the Year

The Nexus
Demon's Souls



LASCIVIOUS LADIES

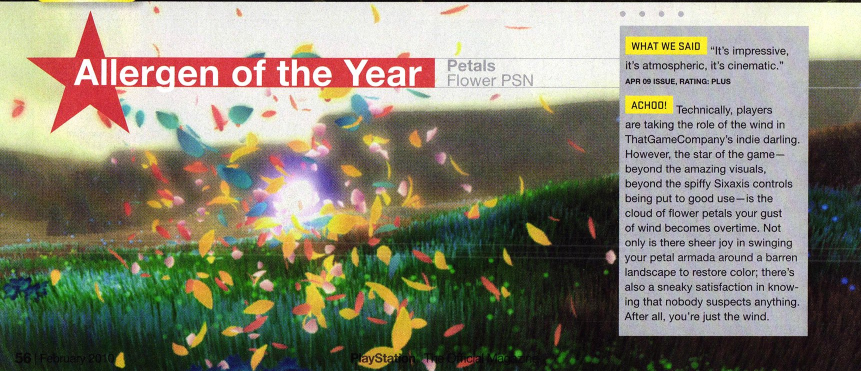
ZAFINA
Tekken 6
Her flexibility and supple muscles... Um, what were we saying?

HARLEY QUINN
Batman: AA
Two words: nurse's uniform.

CHLOE FRAZER
Uncharted 2
Because she wears very tight pants and has a voice that suggests a heavy smoking habit.

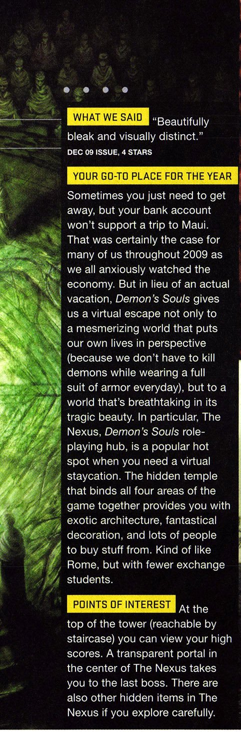
Allergen of the Year

Petals
Flower PSN



WHAT WE SAID "It's impressive, it's atmospheric, it's cinematic."
APR 09 ISSUE, RATING: PLUS

ACHOO! Technically, players are taking the role of the wind in ThatGameCompany's indie darling. However, the star of the game—beyond the amazing visuals, beyond the spiffy Sixaxis controls being put to good use—is the cloud of flower petals your gust of wind becomes overtime. Not only is there sheer joy in swinging your petal armada around a barren landscape to restore color; there's also a sneaky satisfaction in knowing that nobody suspects anything. After all, you're just the wind.



WHAT WE SAID "Beautifully bleak and visually distinct." **DEC 09 ISSUE, 4 STARS**

YOUR GO-TO PLACE FOR THE YEAR Sometimes you just need to get away, but your bank account won't support a trip to Maui. That was certainly the case for many of us throughout 2009 as we all anxiously watched the economy. But in lieu of an actual vacation, *Demon's Souls* gives us a virtual escape not only to a mesmerizing world that puts our own lives in perspective (because we don't have to kill demons while wearing a full suit of armor everyday), but to a world that's breathtaking in its tragic beauty. In particular, The Nexus, *Demon's Souls* role-playing hub, is a popular hot spot when you need a virtual staycation. The hidden temple that binds all four areas of the game together provides you with exotic architecture, fantastical decoration, and lots of people to buy stuff from. Kind of like Rome, but with fewer exchange students.

POINTS OF INTEREST At the top of the tower (reachable by staircase) you can view your high scores. A transparent portal in the center of The Nexus takes you to the last boss. There are also other hidden items in The Nexus if you explore carefully.

Boy of the Year

Sackboy
LittleBigPlanet PSP

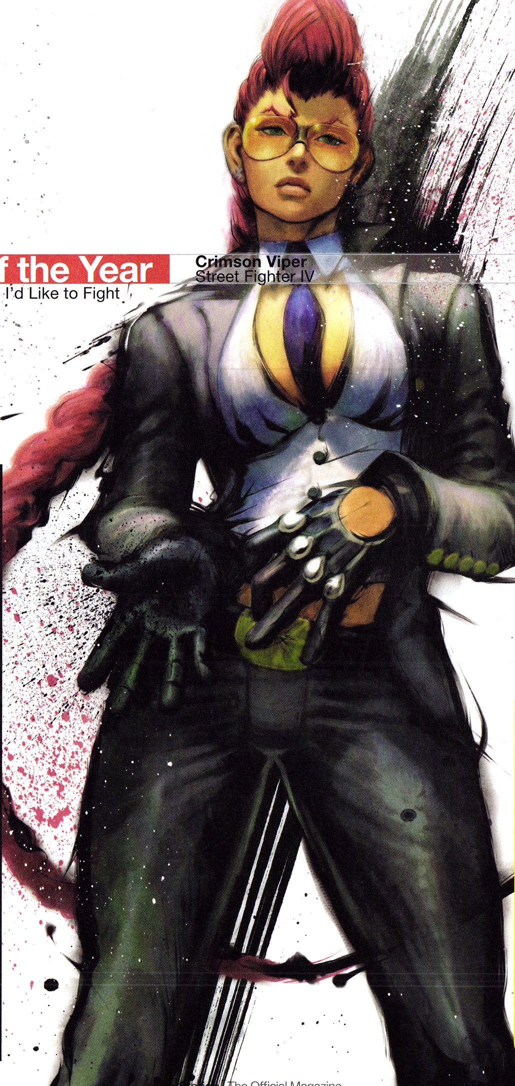
WHAT WE SAID "Your Sackperson is customizable with a slew of different accessories and dynamic facial expressions." **JAN 10 ISSUE, 5 STARS**

WHY SACKBOY'S STILL GOT IT One year ago, Sackboy stole the world's heart on PlayStation 3 and this year he's bringing his textured charm to the PlayStation Portable. Despite the PSP game's lack of multiplayer, Sackboy's allure is undiminished in portable form—he's still got his adorable expressions, customizations, and bizarre physics. If anything, Sackboy's appeal might actually be more powerful on PSP, since we don't even miss the PS3 game's ability to slap around other Sackpeople.

M.I.L.F.* of the Year

*Mom I'd Like to Fight

Crimson Viper
Street Fighter IV

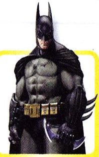


WHAT SHE SAID "That didn't take long. At this rate, I'll be home before she wakes up."
FEB 09 ISSUE, 5 STARS

WHY IT'S TOUGH TO BE A MOM

As far as we can tell, Crimson Viper is a single, working mother in not one, but two male-dominated worlds. First she's a cop, which is already pretty rough on the parenting schedule; second, she's embroiled in a worldwide battle of martial arts skill. As one of only four new characters introduced in *Street Fighter IV* (and the only woman at that), Viper's intriguing background adds a unique new flavor to the fighting game's 22-year history. She also offers experienced players the additional challenge of mastering her fighting style and Ultra Combos. Plus, she's a MILF—do you need any other reason to keep *SF IV* near your PS3?

A MOTHER'S TOUCH Crimson Viper's Temple Massage is a simple Left-Left Punch-Left Kick-Throw combo. It's a quick way to clear your opponent's head (when it hits the floor) and clear a path in one simple move. Be sure to humiliate friends with it often.

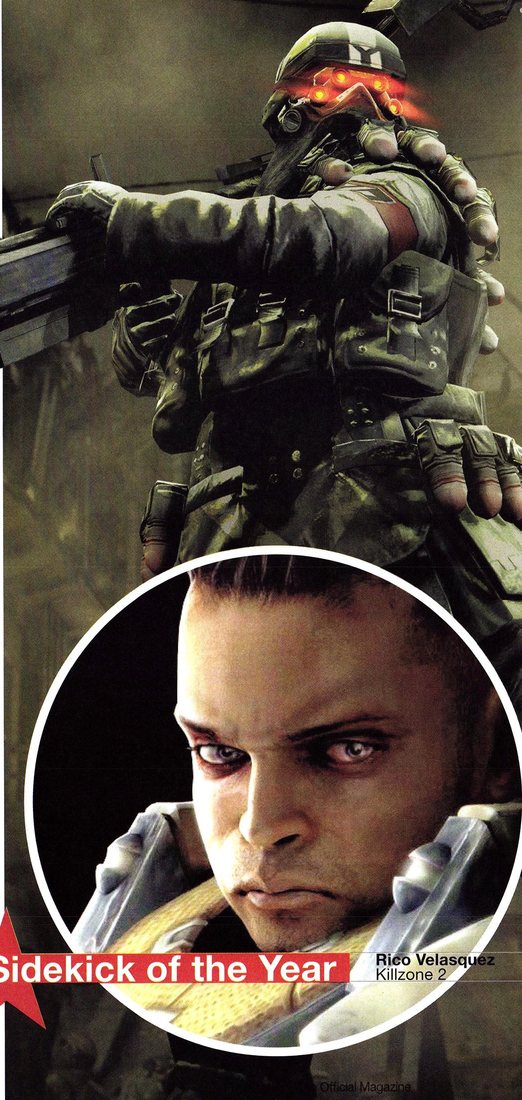


HOTTEST HUNKS

BATMAN
Batman: AA
Even with that huge cape in the way, you can't miss his... sculpted muscles.

GHOST
Modern Warfare 2
Because he's a man's man with a badass mask—with a 50 percent chance of über-sexy beneath it.

CM PUNK
WWE SVR 2010
CM is simply pre-rendered hunkness. Um, not that we'd notice or anything.



Sidekick of the Year

Rico Velasquez
Killzone 2

WHAT WE SAID "The potty-mouthed veteran loves nothing more than getting up close and personal with the enemy and if that means jamming a meaty gun into someone's throat then so be it." **FEB 09 ISSUE, 5 STARS**

WHY YOU WANT HIM BY YOUR SIDE

The bitter struggle between the Helghast and the Interplanetary Strategic Alliance has made monsters of nearly everybody on the battlefield. Between wholesale slaughter of soldiers and in-your-face carnage going on at every moment, it's no surprise that veteran Rico Velasquez has hardened to the point of sadism. Having him with you throughout *Killzone 2* drives home the severity of the combat, making the game that much more visceral. It's like watching an accident—a tangle of metal, blood, and fire from which you can't look away. (Rico would call you all sorts of four- and five-letter words if you did.) While his rough interrogation tactics and foul mouth might grate on you after a half-hundred stomped heads and F-bombs, it gets the job done when it comes to killing Helghast troops. And it's way better to have this guy on your side than to be his opposition.

LOW MOMENT When a rival ISA commander gives Rico a little bit of lip, Rico gives him back a fat lip—and possibly a broken nose with a head-butt-punch-and-stomp combo. Save that aggressiveness for the Helghast, man, not your commanding officers!

NOTABLE NUMBERS

3 as in *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3*

1943 as in *Battlefield 1943*

128 as in Fat Princess's waistline (in inches)

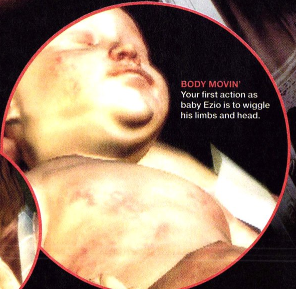
10 BIGGEST WOW MOMENTS IN ASSASSIN'S CREED II

BY ANDY HARTUP

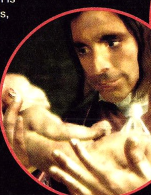
WARNING! SPOILERS AHEAD

1 Ezio Being Born

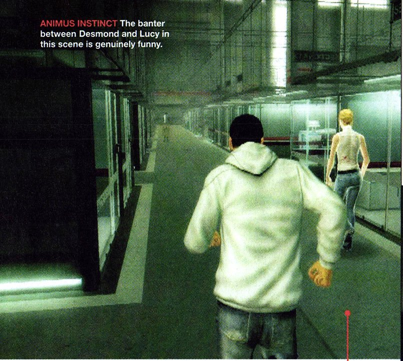
What better way to connect with Ezio than to see him being born, and to control his very first movements. The game cleverly asks you to wiggle baby Ezio's limbs with the buttons that correspond to those appendages throughout the rest of the game. X, which is run in the game, jogs his little legs, while Square makes him take a baby-swipe with his wrist-blade hand. Aww, cute. The scene ends with his father proudly naming him Ezio Auditore da Firenze.



BODY MOVIN'
Your first action as baby Ezio is to wiggle his limbs and head.



FATHERHOOD
At the start you see Ezio being born. This is how Desmond syncs with his memory.



ANIMUS INSTINCT The banter between Desmond and Lucy in this scene is genuinely funny.

2

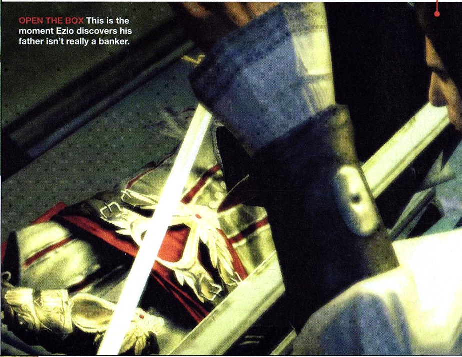
All the Animuses

Desmond and Lucy bust out of the cell at Abstergo and sprint down corridors to an elevator, pausing only to beat up a few security guards. As the elevator descends, you see a vast warehouse floor filled with Animuses. It's a little like the "human battery farm" moment from *The Matrix.* Desmond asks: "Are these all Animuses? Animii? What do you think, Lucy?" To which she replies, "Desmond, shut the f–ck up."

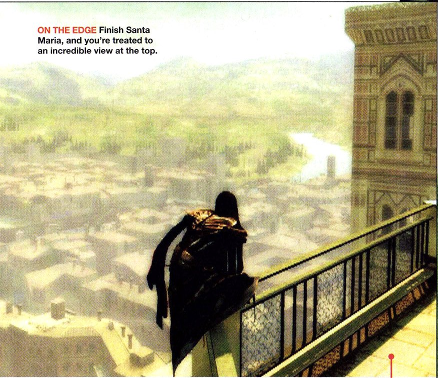
3

Finding Your Dad's Armor

At the start of the actual "meat of the game" in Renaissance Italy, Ezio is just like any other young noble. He fights, jokes around with his brother, and sneaks into his girlfriend's window at night for some sexy time. However, when his family is imprisoned in the tower at the Piazza della Signoria, Ezio's father calls on him to open up the chest in the back of his private study. What's inside? It's his father's assassin armor, hidden blade, and sword. Two hours in, and the boy becomes the man…



OPEN THE BOX This is the moment Ezio discovers his father isn't really a banker.



ON THE EDGE Finish Santa Maria, and you're treated to an incredible view at the top.

4

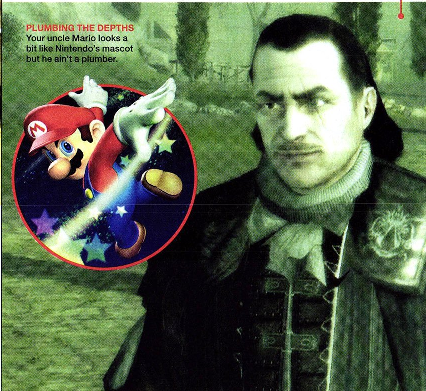
Scaling the Duomo

Each of the six Assassin's Tombs in the game are mini-challenges in themselves. Some are about platforming, some fighting, some puzzling, and some a mix of all three. By far the best of the bunch takes place inside the great dome of Santa Maria del Fiore. Here you're climbing all the way up the inside of the great dome, from bottom to top. Mistakes are punished by instant death (or desynchronization), which makes every jump a leap of faith.

5

Uncle Mario

Possibly the best gaming in-joke of this generation. After fleeing Florence with his sister and mother Ezio arrives at the town of Monteriggioni. Here he gets into a sword fight with one of his family's rivals, but as the battle starts to get serious a mysterious man enters and helps Ezio fend off his attackers. Ezio kneels before the man and offers his thanks. In reply he's answered with, "Don't you recognise me, Ezio? It's-a-me, Mario. Uncle Mario."



PLUMBING THE DEPTHS Your uncle Mario looks a bit like Nintendo's mascot but he ain't a plumber.

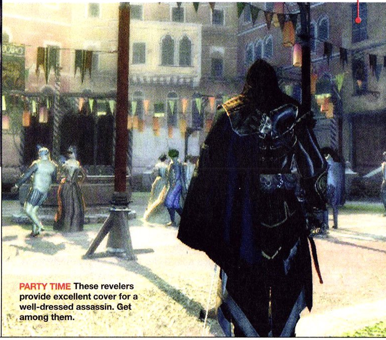
DEADLY DESIRE This flashback section leaves many questions unanswered. Expect a follow up in *AC III.*

6 Altair Returns

Desmond disconnects from the Animus mid-game, but he's spent so long inside that his memories start leaking into reality. In this scene he's then transported back to the Crusades to play a mini-segment as Altair. You follow Maria, a decoy target from the original game, through Acre to the top of a watchtower where the pair spend the night. As Altair wakes up and kisses Maria goodbye, Desmond is flung back to reality.

7 Carnevale in Venice

During Carnevale the whole of Venice comes alive. Fireworks fill the air, street performers show off acrobatics and breathe fire in the face of onlookers. It's a genuine spectacle. Ezio's missions are themed around the event, as he tries to win a golden facemask that grants him entry to a ball. It climaxes with Ezio nudging his way through the revelers to put a bullet through his target.



PARTY TIME These revelers provide excellent cover for a well-dressed assassin. Get among them.

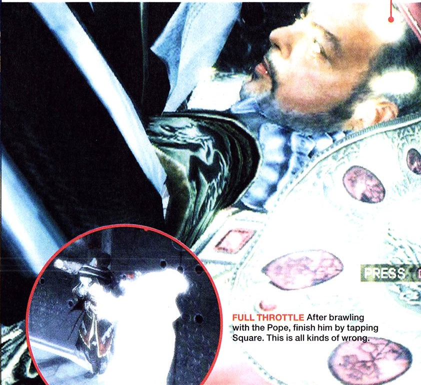
GARDEN OF EDEN These two are called Adam and Eve, but they free-run like Ezio. Hmm...

8 Discovering the Truth

What is a "Piece of Eden"? Why are the Templars scanning Desmond's memory to find it? The answer to these questions, and a very bold claim about the origins of the species, can be found in the video you unlock by finding and decoding all 20 glyphs inside the Animus world. Each glyph is a glitch in the programming left by Desmond's predecessor. Combine all 20 for a startling end result.

9 Fist Fight the Pope

Yeah, you read that right—fist fighting the Pope. You can even knock him on the ground and deliver a swift kick to his private holiness. Why is Ezio brawling with the leader of the Catholic Church? It's explained in the game but, to make a long story short, "The Spaniard" is behind all the unrest in the game. He manipulates his way to the title of Pope to access a vault inside the Vatican. He can't open it, though. But Ezio can...

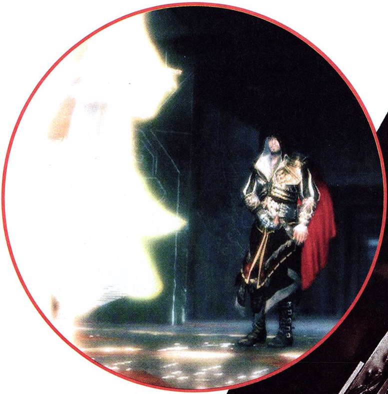


FULL THROTTLE After brawling with the Pope, finish him by tapping Square. This is all kinds of wrong.

10

The Real History of Earth

As "big moments" in games go, this is pretty epic. After leaving the Pope a bloody mess, Ezio enters the secret vault inside the Vatican to discover a hi-tech room containing a holographic projection of "a god." She delivers "the prophecy" to Desmond (smashing the fourth wall she addresses you, the player, directly—sending shivers down your spine) and that opens up a whole new can of worms. Turns out the sun will destroy the earth unless the assassins can bring peace to the world. Now *this* is how you set up a third game in a series...

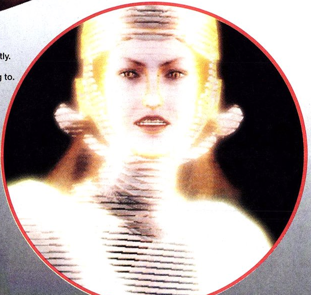


VAULT TEC Ezio finds this hi-tech room deep inside the Vatican where he meets a virutal god.

The ones we didn't pick...

EVERYONE IS AN ASSASSIN
Uncle Mario, Antonio, even Leonardo da Vinci—every leader of the various factions you've been working with are assassins. And they knew all about the Spaniard's plan to locate the Piece of Eden from the start. Fine. Don't tell us!

THE DOUBLE KILL
Halfway through the game, Leonardo upgrades your weaponry to allow Ezio to carry two hidden blades. This allows you to pull off double murders from both ground level and above. It feels good leaping on two foes at once.



FACE OFF This lady addresses you directly. Ezio even asks who she's actually talking to.

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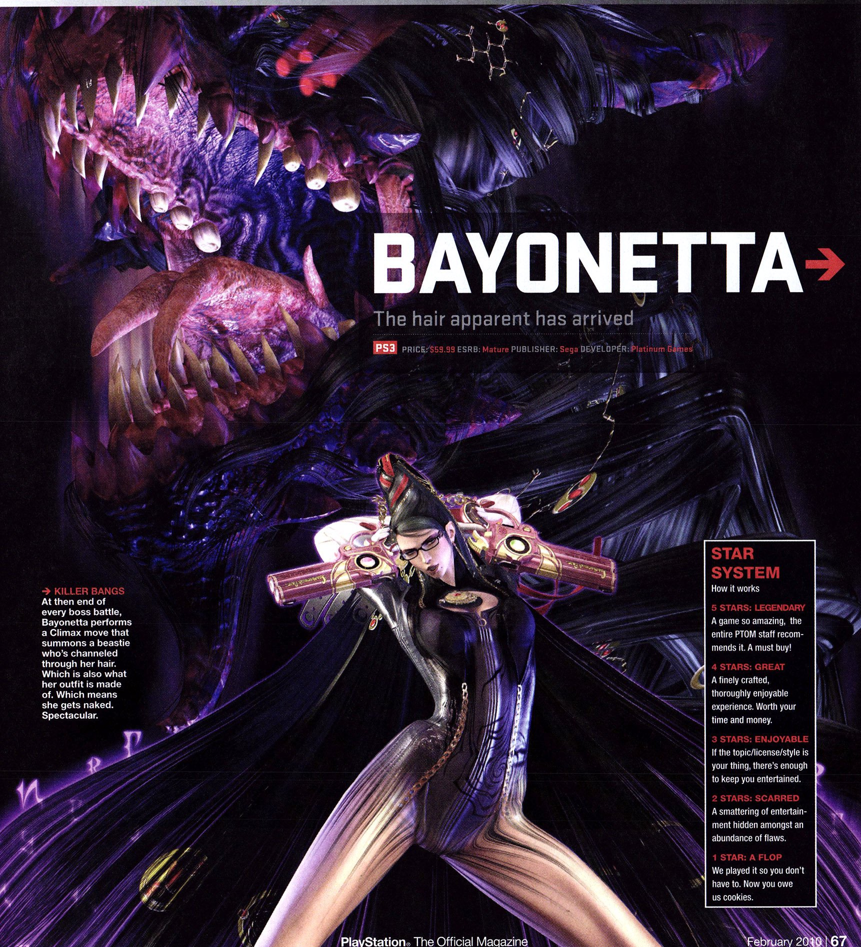
BAYONETTA →

The hair apparent has arrived

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Sega DEVELOPER: Platinum Games



→ KILLER BANGS
At then end of every boss battle, Bayonetta performs a Climax move that summons a beastie who's channeled through her hair. Which is also what her outfit is made of. Which means she gets naked. Spectacular.

STAR SYSTEM

How it works

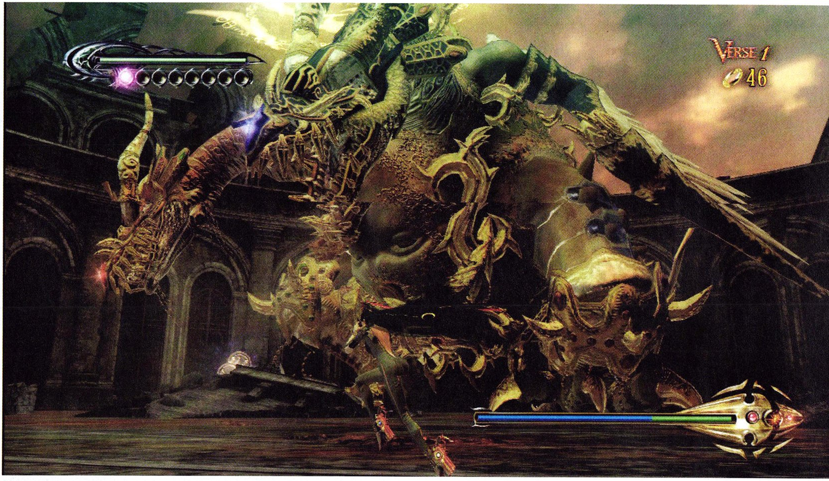
5 STARS: LEGENDARY
A game so amazing, the entire PTOM staff recommends it. A must buy!

4 STARS: GREAT
A finely crafted, thoroughly enjoyable experience. Worth your time and money.

3 STARS: ENJOYABLE
If the topic/license/style is your thing, there's enough to keep you entertained.

2 STARS: SCARRED
A smattering of entertainment hidden amongst an abundance of flaws.

1 STAR: A FLOP
We played it so you don't have to. Now you owe us cookies.



↑ This guy? Puny compared to some of the later bosses.

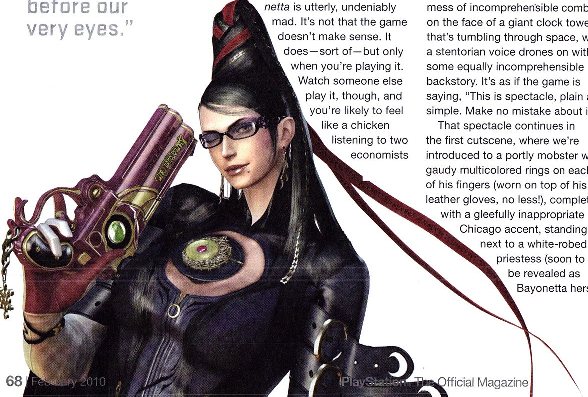
> "Impossibly elegant combat unfolds before our very eyes."

Three things you need to know about Bayonetta: 1) She carries a gun in each hand and strapped to each foot. 2) Her outfit is made entirely of her hair, and when she hits something hard enough, that hair goes flying off her body. 3) She is awesome.

Anything beyond that might just confuse you, because *Bayonetta* is utterly, undeniably mad. It's not that the game doesn't make sense. It does—sort of—but only when you're playing it. Watch someone else play it, though, and you're likely to feel like a chicken listening to two economists discussing Federal Reserve monetary policy. Sure, they probably know what they're talking about, but all you can hear? "Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck."

Things change when you actually play the game—but not at first. In fact, *Bayonetta* makes a commitment to outrageous lunacy from its opening scene: a frenetic, chaotic mess of incomprehensible combat on the face of a giant clock tower that's tumbling through space, while a stentorian voice drones on with some equally incomprehensible backstory. It's as if the game is saying, "This is spectacle, plain and simple. Make no mistake about it."

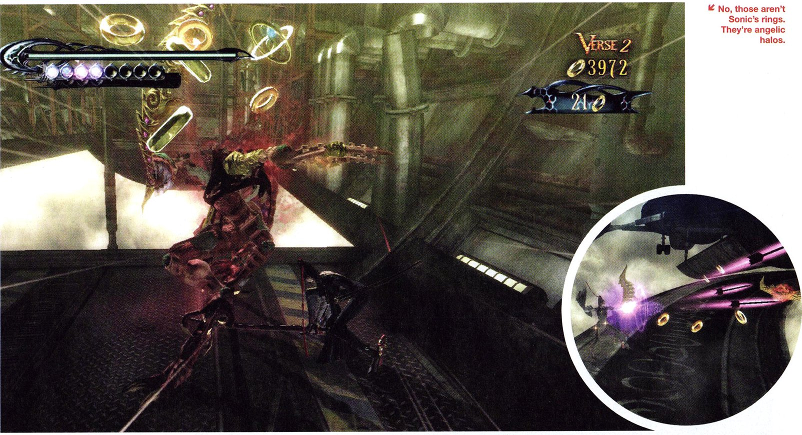
That spectacle continues in the first cutscene, where we're introduced to a portly mobster with gaudy multicolored rings on each of his fingers (worn on top of his leather gloves, no less!), complete with a gleefully inappropriate Chicago accent, standing next to a white-robed priestess (soon to be revealed as Bayonetta herself) chattering in a faux-British accent. The scene quickly devolves into utter confusion, as graves are busted open, menacing angels descend from the heavens, and impossibly elegant combat unfolds before our very eyes. And yet, that dumbfounded look on our faces quickly turned into a massive grin that stuck with us for the rest of the 15-hour experience. "Holy sh–t, they can't be serious!" is what we thought then—and we still think now. But they can. And they are. And it works.



Try not to blink

Bayonetta is a game that's all about surprises. And the biggest surprise: the combat. At a glance, it'd be far too easy to dismiss this game as deliciously self-aware fan-service that happens to be attached to a game—or perhaps a pale take on *Devil May Cry,* with a saucy female lead. That'd be a huge mistake. In fact, not only is *Bayonetta* the game *DMC* should've been, but it's a new highwater mark for this style of third-person combo-based combat.

But that won't be apparent right away. Like we said, the game begins with spectacle, then moves into a brief period when you're finding your footing, simply mashing buttons

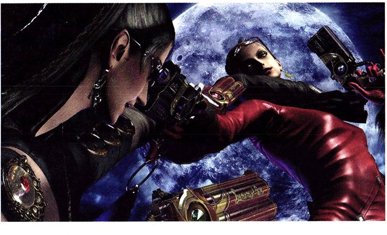


No, those aren't Sonic's rings. They're angelic halos.

and praying that something cool happens. Often enough it does, primarily because those early levels have enough angelic scrubs (yes, you hunt *angels,* then harvest their halos) that you can take down with ease. Plus, the game is stuffed with so many different types of combos and moves that you're bound to pull off a nifty trick by mistake.

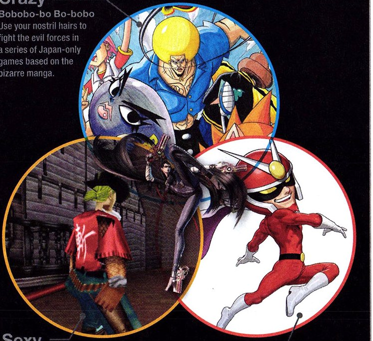
Then things get tough, and the game gets real.

Play *Bayonetta* on the default Normal difficulty level and you'll soon find yourself dying. A lot. It began to happen to us after a couple of hours, and it was at that point that we started studying the combos and how they string together to create killer moves that work in some situations but not in others. Every enemy type has different patterns, and every boss requires careful study to defeat. And it's not just about finding the right interplay of light/heavy button presses, then executing them at the exact right moment. This game also requires you to dodge, constantly and perfectly. Evade an attack at just the right moment, and you trigger Witch Time, a brief moment when the world moves at a slower pace while you dash around. These dodges are often the only way to defeat certain foes, since you'll need to basically halt the onslaught of attacks simply to land a hit. It changes the nature of combat, putting equal emphasis on defense and offense in a way that forced us to constantly lean forward, eyes drying out as we desperately tried to focus on every last detail on screen.



Crazy, Sexy, Cool

Forget *Devil May Cry's* Dante. And stop comparing her to Sarah Palin. We dug deep into the PlayStation library to find *Bayonetta's* true influences.



Crazy

Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo

Use your nostril hairs to fight the evil forces in a series of Japan-only games based on the bizarre manga.

Sexy

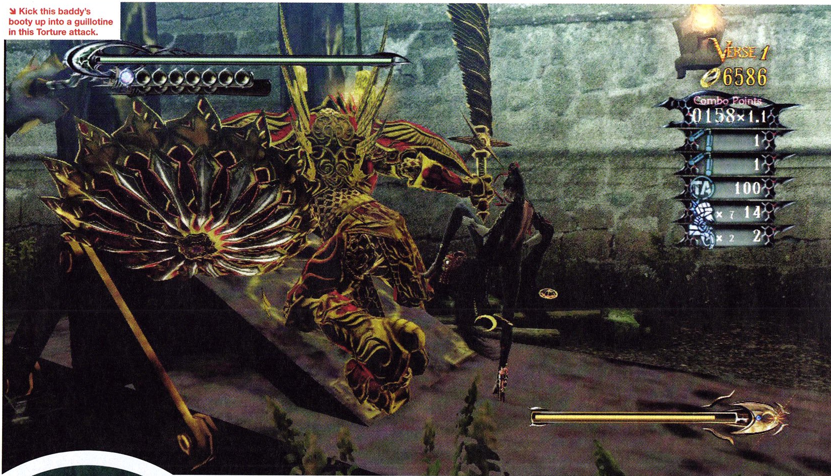
Zan

Get a high enough score, and the hero of PSone gem *Rising Zan: Samurai Gunman* can attain Super Ultra Sexy Hero status.

Cool

Viewtiful Joe

Another game directed by *Bayonetta's* Hideki Kamiya, *Viewtiful Joe* was all about pulling off cinematic moves.



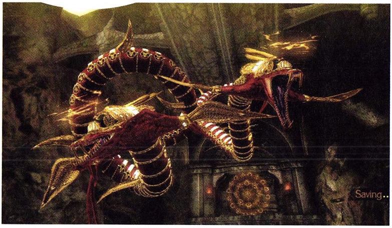
↘ Kick this baddy's booty up into a guillotine in this Torture attack.

Safety word

So this isn't a game for buttonmashers—though there are moments when it's a total delight to just hammer on a single button and watch the damage multipliers add up. Just make sure you don't miss the opportunity. The first time we pulled off a Climax move—the finisher on every major boss—we almost missed the prompt flashing in a corner of the screen, such was the absurd spectacle of seeing Bayonetta's hair literally fly off her body and form into a huge creature that pounded our gargantuan adversary into oblivion. It's almost as if the game dares you to stare at Bayonetta's nearly nude body while also daring you to look away so you don't miss your cue to add insult to the boss's injury. Same goes with the Torture attacks, elaborate set-piece moves that summon everything from a giant guillotine to a colossal chainsaw, which inflict immense damage if you pull them off at the right moment, then follow up with the correct button prompts. Both are perfect rewards for mastering your moves and sweating through battle after battle.

We came to crave those moments of brief respite from the frenetic action, because at times *Bayonetta* can be wildly, cruelly imbalanced. One moment we're slaughtering angels, the next moment a pair of feral, armored, lightning-spewing creatures pop up and begin to juggle us between them, whittling down our health in milliseconds. And those bosses? Sometimes they're so enormous that you quite literally won't be able to find yourself on screen the first few times you fight them.

Yet despite the punishing difficulty, we often felt like we were held in the loving embrace of a professional sadist who delivered masochistic



Verse 2
9215
Combo Points
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30

➘ Refer Madness

Bayonetta is full of nods and winks to pop culture's finest, including a few of our favorite references to Sega and Capcom classics. (Director Hideki Kamiya worked on games for both publishers.) See if you can spot these during your playthrough.

Sonic
Space Harrier
Resident Evil
Virtua Fighter
Fantasy Zone
After Burner
Okami
Viewtiful Joe
OutRun
Devil May Cry
Hang-On

Bayonetta said my name!

thrills to us through our battered DualShock. We knew that if we stuck it out, practiced our combos, kept searching for the right set of moves or the right weapons and accessories to bring into battle, we'd eventually make our way through. There's pleasure in the pain that *Bayonetta* brought us—and the joy of victory was enough to make us actually crave the suffering that was doled out liberally throughout our journey.

A different kind of girl

But perhaps the biggest surprise about *Bayonetta:* You can have a very different gameplay experience depending on how you develop your character. This is no RPG, but *Bayonetta* is full of choices, chief among them your weapons. As you unlock new damage-dealers—like a shotgun, sword, whip, claws, even ice skates—the game will play entirely differently depending on how (and where) you equip them. Want to jam away on super-quick combos? Try the skates on your feet and the sword in the hands. Craving distance and power? Whip in hands and shotgun on legs. The timing, and even a few of the combos, will change depending on your weapon set, and you can switch between two loadouts on the fly for an even wider range of attack options. Other game-changers: accessories that provide new defensive or offensive options; purchasable moves that increase your repertoire in unexpected ways; and lollipops that can heal, boost, or protect you. No matter what you choose, there's no way you'll unlock everything on the first go-round, giving you even more reason to play *Bayonetta* again and again and again.

It's almost a shame that we have to mention the flaws in this game, so we'll get them out of the way quickly. We already touched upon the unbalanced difficulty, but we also wish there was a difficulty level between Normal and Easy—the latter of which is *too* easy because it basically plays the game for you, pulling off combos regardless of what you push and when you push it. The game is also a bit low-res for our tastes, but it more than makes up for its graphical softness with its abundance of style. Finally, the load times are as massive as the bosses, but that's alleviated somewhat by the Practice mode that appears during the wait. (Hint: Press Select to keep the Practice mode on, and make sure you master your combos before rushing into battle.)

So there you have it—everything you need to know about *Bayonetta.* She's packing heat, she always has a great hair day, and she's awesome. Just don't make the mistake of thinking you truly know her until you play the game more than once. Because she *will* surprise you. | Gary Steinman

Rating ★★★★⯪

THE SABOTEUR

Vive la revolution

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Mature
PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: Pandemic Studios

Imagine a game that combines *Grand Theft Auto's* core gameplay with the stealth of *Assassin's Creed,* the free climbing of *inFamous,* and the racing of *MotorStorm.* Now set that game in France during the early days of WWII, and have it star an Irish racecar driver named Sean Devlin, a member of the resistance movement entrenched in the back alleys of Paris. Toss in a revenge subplot, then finish it off with a jazzy soundtrack.

Did we mention the game is also in black-and-white?

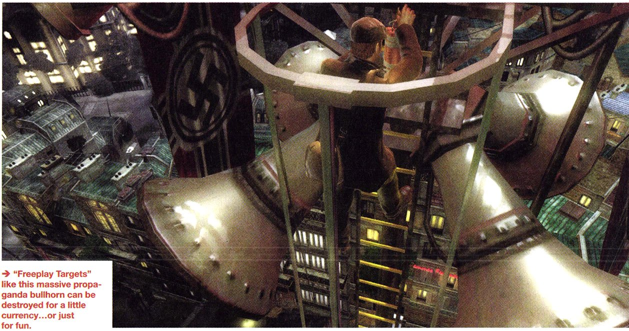
Sound like it could be a mess? Well, here's the good news: It's not. Although the borrowed mechanics don't always function flawlessly, this open-world shooter still delivers a fun and rewarding experience.

Black, white, and red all over

So there's a lot going on here. But first, the most noticeable and original aspect of this game: the color—or lack thereof. Apparently, Nazi oppression has gotten to be so bad that the world has literally been drained of any tints or hues (aside from the crimson blood that spills from Nazi bullet wounds, along with a few other spots of color). As you liberate areas of the city, the citizenry cheers up—and the colors return to the once-occupied districts.

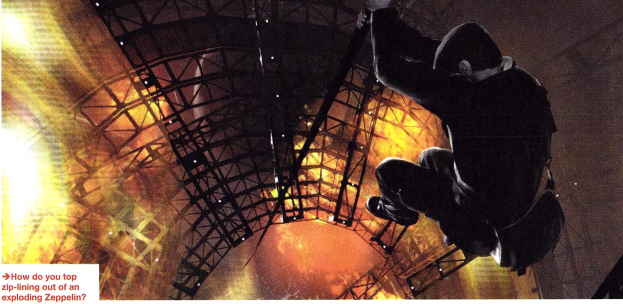
Yes, it's as painfully obvious as you might think, but the color restoration is just one aspect of the pleasantly solid story. Nothing in the narrative feels like an afterthought; *The Saboteur's* story actually serves as the rudder that steers the game and encourages you to continue playing. And sure, the characters never develop much, but at the least the game takes the time to let you get to know them.

Too bad the missions don't live up to the quality of the story. A few absolutely blew us away, including one castle invasion and a couple of races through the streets of Paris. The rest? Empty commuting with very little variety to make it worthwhile. Go here, shoot this guy or grab that item, then return. It doesn't help that *The Saboteur's* Paris, while expansive and detailed, lacks the vitality of *GTA IV's* Liberty City.



➔ **"Freeplay Targets" like this massive propaganda bullhorn can be destroyed for a little currency…or just for fun.**

↙ As with most games, the rocket launcher packs a devastating punch, but you can only pack two weapons at a time… so choose wisely.



→ How do you top zip-lining out of an exploding Zeppelin?

Quiet in, loud out

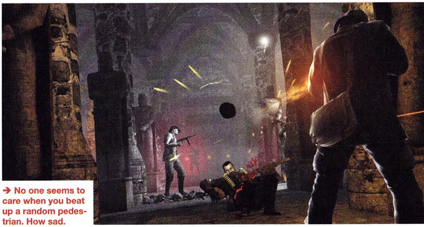
At its core, *The Saboteur* is a run-and-gun-down-Nazis game. Yes, there's a cover system, which proves useful on occasion, especially during later missions. And yes, there's a very light progression system that lets you earn new skills and weapons as you play. It doesn't add any real depth, but it's a nice touch. The aiming control is tight, and the sound effects and bullet impacts are satisfying. As long as you don't expect too much from the weak enemy AI or the standard weapon selection, you'll have a grand time mowing down Nazis.

There are a few occasions, however, where subtlety proves to be the wiser approach. When those moments come, you can hold the designated "sneak" button to crouch and move silently, perform melee stealth kills, and even "borrow" a dead soldier's uniform. Successful stealthing is immensely rewarding, but you'll have to contend with the overly sensitive alarm system. It takes next to nothing for a guard to become suspicious and blow the "hey come kill this dude" whistle, and once he does, you'll have no choice but to run to the edge of an arbitrary suspicion ring. It doesn't matter if you've already killed all the guards around you; the alarm won't cease until you exit the circle or find one of the all too rare hiding spots.

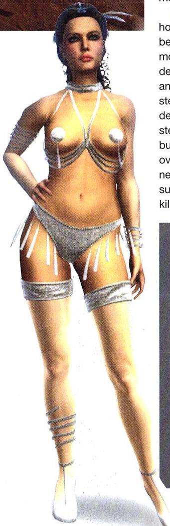
Occasionally, your free-climbing skills can save you from the overzealous alarm, but typically, scaling the side of a building is neither required nor practical. Racing proves to be more fun thanks to the solid controls and amazing assortment of classic, unlockable racecars, but it plays a relatively minor role in the overall game. Most of the time, you'll simply be speeding from one safe house to another.

So is *The Saboteur* an original experience? Not really. Aside from the black-and-white world, you've pretty much seen everything this game offers. But its solid execution, along with its sheer audacity in mixing all these gameplay styles and features together, makes for an entertaining experience. | Scott Butterworth

Rating ★★★★☆

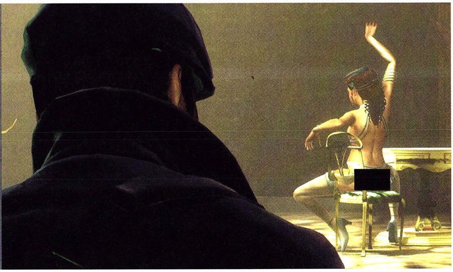


→ No one seems to care when you beat up a random pedestrian. How sad.



↖ Download this to get naked

The Saboteur comes with some saucy day-one DLC called The Midnight Show that will allow you to unlock nudity within the game. However, this really only impacts your starting safe house…which happens to be a strip club. The real reason to download the patch? All the extra in-game hiding spots that come with it. The download is free if you buy the game new, so be sure to use that packed-in redemption code.



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DARKSIDERS

Not much love, but plenty of War

PS3 PRICE: **$59.99** ESRB: **Mature** PUBLISHER: **THQ** DEVELOPER: **Vigil Games**

When *Darksiders'* apocalypse comes, it comes early—earlier than it's supposed to, in fact. With the biblical Seven Seals still unbroken, angels and demons brawl through the streets of modern-day New York, bringing about catastrophic destruction and the eventual end of human civilization.

Fast-forward 100 years, and the legions of Hell reign over the burned-out husk of Earth, now a wasteland infested with demons and zombies. Hell's victory and humanity's extinction were the work of a traitor who upset the balance of power, and suspicion falls on War, the only Horseman of the Apocalypse to ride during the cataclysm. To clear his name, War stomps out into the remains of the world to find out what happened, and to punish those responsible.

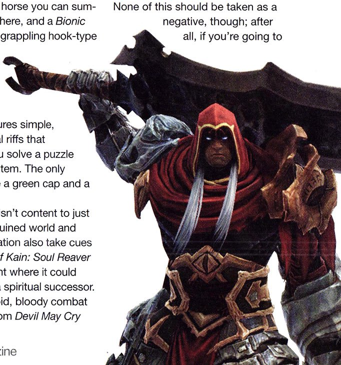
Familiar territory

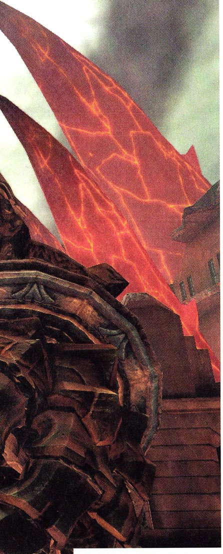
There was a time, not too long ago, when a game like *Darksiders* would have been hyped as a *"Zelda-*killer." It's really more of a *Zelda*-borrower though, as *Darksiders* lifts plenty of key elements from the legendary series without being an outright copy. As the humorless, impossibly burly War, you stomp through the ruins of a somewhat open-world New York filled with hidden goodies and frequently respawning enemies—including demons *and* techno-armored angels, the latter blaming you for Hell's victory. There are sprawling dungeons to explore, each of which hides a special weapon or tool that's instrumental to solving its puzzles and beating its bosses. There's a horse you can summon almost anywhere, and a *Bionic Commando*-style grappling hook-type device you can use to yank enemies around or swing across gaps. It even features simple, consistent musical riffs that play whenever you solve a puzzle or unearth a cool item. The only things missing are a green cap and a princess to save.

But *Darksiders* isn't content to just imitate *Zelda*. Its ruined world and jump-filled exploration also take cues from the *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* games, to the point where it could almost be called a spiritual successor. Meanwhile, its rapid, bloody combat grabs elements from *Devil May Cry* and *God of War,* complete with tons of unlockable moves and combos, color-coded "souls" that can be used to buy upgrades, and elaborate fatalities activated with a button press.

Great artists steal

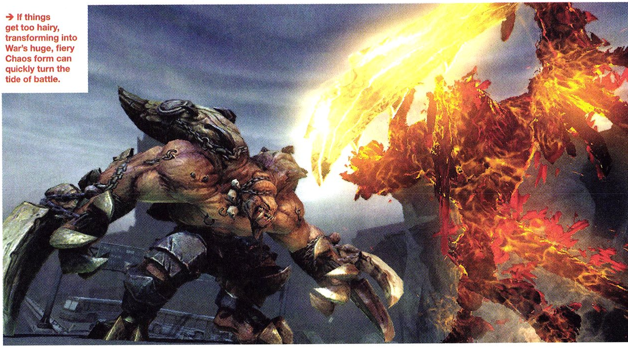
None of this should be taken as a negative, though; after all, if you're going to





Darksiders' bosses—like Straga here—are all gigantic, and fighting them tends to revolve around a single, puzzle-y gimmick.

Once freed, War's horse, Ruin, can be summoned whenever you're outside.



If things get too hairy, transforming into War's huge, fiery Chaos form can quickly turn the tide of battle.

steal, you might as well steal from the best. And while *Darksiders* never quite equals or surpasses any of the games it imitates, it's still pretty good in its own right, offering up 15 to 20 hours of increasingly fun exploration and carnage through a beautifully realized hellscape dreamed up by comics genius Joe Madureira. It also boasts a few cool innovations of its own, including two upgradable, secondary weapons—a giant scythe and a big, nasty gauntlet—that can chain together combos with War's oversized sword, rather than outright replacing it. Even War's tertiary weapons, including a pistol and a boomerang-like shuriken, can be brought in to enable massive combo chains.

Darksiders' world is so well-designed, and the rewards so frequent, that it's almost enough to make you forget that much of the game revolves around hacking through increasingly tougher re-skins of the same handful of basic monster types. Each of these are identifiable mainly by the one or two repetitive fatalities War uses to dispatch them, and watching him bisect near-identical demons exactly the same way, over and over, isn't much of a thrill after the first 100 times. We're also not fans of the onerous fetch-quests the game puts you through; they don't happen often, but when they do, get ready for lots of tedious backtracking through familiar, enemy-infested areas.

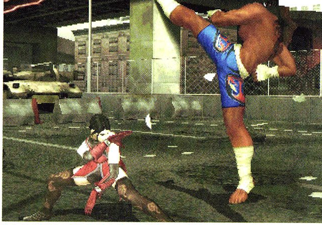
Those repetitive moments are quickly forgotten once you get back to exploring *Darksider's* beautifully devastated world, unearthing its hidden treasures, tackling its sometimes-devious environmental puzzles, and spending time with its bizarre characters (brought to life by top-notch vocal talents like Mark Hamill and Phil LaMarr). *Darksiders* might be a hard sell once the holidays are over, but if you're looking for a big, bloody, buttonmashy adventure, it should hold you over quite well until *God of War III* arrives. | Mikel Reparaz

Rating ★★★★☆

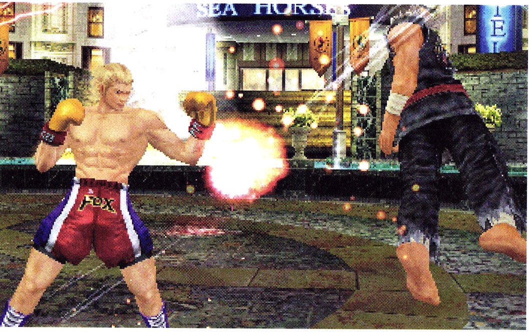
"Hell's victory and humanity's extinction were the work of a traitor."

↑ Not quite a triumph

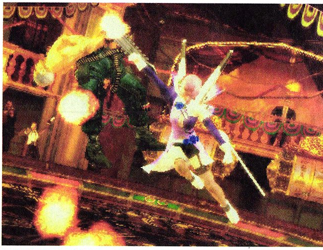
Darksiders has its own version of the gun from *Portal*, but don't get too excited. Late in the game, you'll find the Voidwalker, a device that creates linked blue-and-orange portals for quick travel, but these can only be applied to special surfaces. However, figuring out how best to use those surfaces is key to solving the Voidwalker puzzles, and helps set the gameplay mechanic apart from *Portal's* more freewheeling approach.



↑ Astrologist and temple defender Zafina could be the twin of Voldo from *Soulcalibur,* only way hotter and not blind.



↑ Normally, we'd put our money on Heihachi in this bout. But Steve's outfit *is* a bit of a distraction—not that there's anything wrong with that.



↑ Maybe it's the pink hair and green eyes, but Alisa Bosconovich just seems so sweet, so demure...so freakin' deadly.

TEKKEN 6

Fighting game turns fashion show

PSP PRICE: $39.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Games DEVELOPER: Namco Bandai Games

It's weird dressing Heihachi Mishima in a classic business suit. But after six hours of earning money in single-player modes, what else can you do in the PSP *Tekken 6* besides reduce the fearsome King of Iron Fist Tournament founder to a reject from the cast of *Mad Men?*

Not that we don't dig character customization; it was a huge draw for *Tekken 5* and its PSP version, *Dark Resurrection.* Even better, *Tekken 5's* Gold Rush mode returns for the ride, which makes it that much easier to earn tons of money to blow on clothes. Also, like *Dark Resurrection, Tekken 6* PSP adds new characters and stages to the standard game mode lineup (Arcade, Time Attack, etc.) so you've got even more people to dress up. We'd argue cyborg cutie Alisa Bosconovich doesn't need a makeover, though. With jet wings that sprout from her back and arms that turn into chainsaws with the correct button taps, she's easily the best part of the game. Plus, she has pink hair.

Roster updates aside, it feels like something is missing from this *Tekken 6.* It could be the several levels cut from the Story mode, which shortened the lengthy console campaign experience for the sake of portability. It could also be the loss of fluidity in the controls as the game drops from two analog sticks on console to one on PSP. But our money is on a lack of finesse in porting the console experience—a deep fighting game with a 15-year history of complex combos and a convoluted back story—to handheld. Instead of getting the elaborate branching storylines and epic boss battles, for example, we're stuck with lots of loading screens and Azazel—quite possibly the cheapest boss in *Tekken* history—who occupies more than half of the PSP's screen.

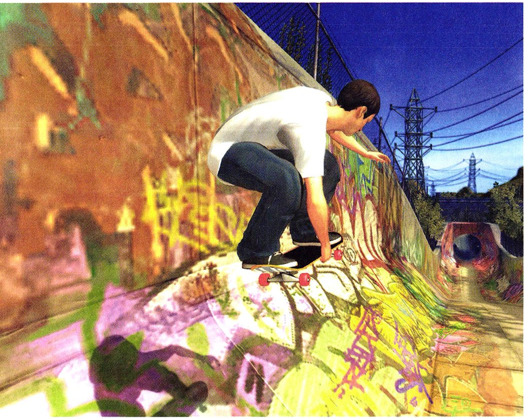
All in all, it just doesn't feel as fresh—or as fun—as *Dark Resurrection.* It's also not quite as deep as *Tekken 6* on consoles. But there's still satisfying multiplayer and the infinitely hilarious possibilities of dressing up Mokujin in spectacles and a cowboy hat. If only we could do that to Azazel. | AJ Glasser

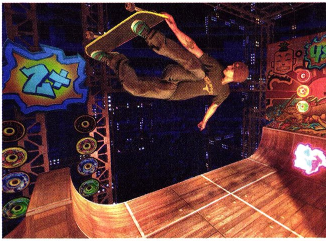
Rating ★★★⯪☆

↑ How To Spot A Cyborg

- Metal parts pop out of her body.
- She has a sense of morality that causes her to apologize after kicking your ass.
- She really is a *she*—it's *androids* that don't have gender.

Skating on Casual difficulty is a blast, but control issues abound on harder settings—that's two-thirds of the game.





Thank god for the Vert Ramp, where landing tricks doesn't send you veering uncontrollably into a wall.

Grinds are simple to perform, but Flick Tricks are consistently frustrating to execute.

TONY HAWK RIDE

So this is what happens when the wheels come off...

PS3 PRICE: $119.99 (with skateboard controller) ESRB: Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: Activision DEVELOPER: Robomodo Games

We want to be gods—it's why we play games. When we want to be a rock god, we play *Guitar Hero*. When we wanted to be a skate god, we turned to *Tony Hawk RIDE* in hope that it could elevate our boarding skills to heavenly heights. Instead, the game bailed hard, delivering its own particular brand of $120 hell.

Which is ironic because we'd probably be complaining if this *Tony Hawk* were just like the nine previous games in the series. There's no denying that the board controller is well built, and can even be considered a technological marvel. And it's fun to use in *RIDE's* Casual (easy) difficulty setting, where the levels are rail-based and you can focus on executing tricks. With no concern for navigation, we happily carved our way through Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Spain, Japan, and Germany in Speed (time trial), Trick, and Challenge modes.

But it's when *RIDE* is played at the Confident (medium) or Hardcore (hard) settings that the board controller becomes an implement of evil. Suddenly, slight shifts in balance have you veering away from your desired path and mastering the straight line becomes the most difficult trick in the game. Ultimately, the only people who have a chance at mastering *RIDE* are those who are already skateboarders or possess an unnatural level of balance and coordination.

Of course, it might just be that our boarding skills are lame, and that with enough exposure and repetition this ill-conceived control system could become manageable. But when you've invested double-digit hours on a playthrough only to declare exhausted defeat (vainly attempting to discover a control cheat to avoid stepping aboard the controller again), that's a major fail. And one we certainly wouldn't advise spending $120 on just to prove us wrong. | Roger Burchill

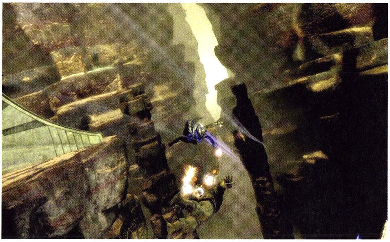
Rating ★★☆☆☆

Out of Controller

Knocked Senseless
The four sensors are used to "propel" the board and execute advanced moves, but they're finicky about registering overly rapid control inputs.

Up to the Grind
Quality-wise, the board is exceptionally robust and well constructed.

Off Balance
The board's biggest problem is its lack of predictability—seemingly identical control inputs can yield wildly different actions or none at all.



↓ Upgrade your rocket pack with infinite missiles for a real boost.

DARK VOID

A rocket pack makes everything cooler

PS3 PRICE: **$59.99** ESRB: **Teen** PUBLISHER: **Capcom** DEVELOPER: **Airtight Studios**

Crash landing on an uncharted island in the Bermuda Triangle and becoming trapped in a dark Void is never a great way to start a day—especially if your ex-fiancée is along for the ride. But if you're freelance pilot Will Grey, your old flame Eva and her "baggage" is the least of your worries when confronted by reptilian aliens intent on enslaving the human race.

As we explored the Void's jungle landscape, we came across god-fearing villagers, lost militia, and such notable missing persons as Amelia Earhart. We also discovered a number of audio diaries that helped us gain our bearings—while revealing what's been going on in the Void—as we searched for a way out. During this early exploratory phase we encountered the famous inventor Nikola Tesla who, surprisingly, never died (he's been trapped in the Void for years). An industrious man, Tesla has created high-tech flying machines like a distinctly *Rockateer*-style rocket pack and an improbably shaped ship, the "Ark," to aid the human rebellion against the Watchers (the aliens).

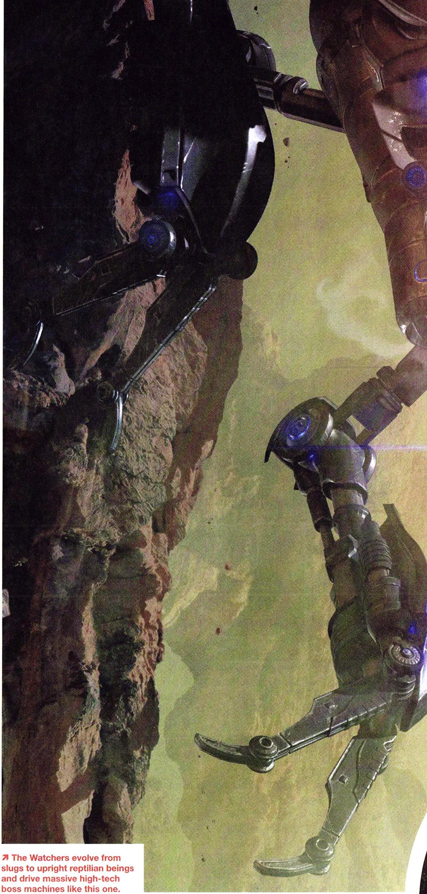
> "Flying and fighting with a rocket pack strapped to our back is an extraordinary experience."

Shotgun FTW

While Will was busy assuming his new role as the rebellion's reluctant hero, we were coming to grips with the game's basic game functions: third-person shooting, vertical platforming, and aerial dog-fighting. The shooting experience is decent at best, offering six relatively drab weapons that delivered little impact on enemies and left less of an impression on us. The weapons upgrade system helps remedy the situation—but only the fully upgraded shotgun, with its megaton blast, really delivers a rocking sensation.

But the upgrade system presents a balancing problem, doling out precious few high-cost upgrades and punishing you with severe consequences if you choose the "wrong" upgrade path. If you strive for balance instead of maximizing a few select weapons, you will find yourself heavily outgunned near game's end. The issue is exacerbated if you choose not to upgrade the rocket pack (in favor of another gun), a virtual necessity in the final few chapters.

The vertical platforming brings a change in pace and scenery. Climbing improbably steep cliff sides, descending down chasms, and hanging by one hand while blasting enemies with the other makes for a novel experience. The most notable instance occurred aboard the long-lost battleship *U.S.S. Cyclops:* The vessel's knack for breaking apart at improbable moments makes for a thrilling set piece. Unfortunately, while the vertical platforming initially feels fresh, the action never develops beyond endlessly blasting low-level thugs.



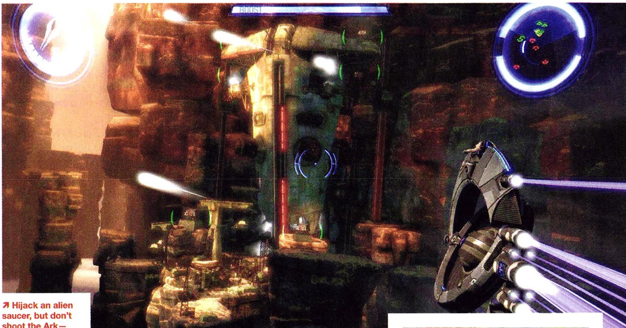
↗ The Watchers evolve from slugs to upright reptilian beings and drive massive high-tech boss machines like this one.

Fight and flight

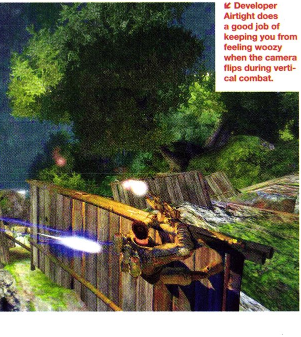
The aerial combat is by far the most accomplished element of the game. Will's rocket pack starts as a mere booster pack, helping him with little bursts to kick off the vertical platforming sections. As we progressed, the rocket pack evolved, with upgrades including fully sustained flight, extended boosters, a navigation helmet, and infinite missiles (to accompany infinite machine-gun fire). Flying and fighting with a rocket pack strapped to our back is an extraordinary experience. The pack imparts incredible agility, with control that's squirrelly yet manageable, and it looks super cool in action. A combination of heat-distortion effects and fiery particles creates the perfect visual complement to the rocket pack's operation. Large-scale 3D environments offer ample flying room to enjoy the game's most successful aspect.

So while the shooting and platforming elements don't individually ignite the gameplay experience, when *Dark Void* combines them with the superb aerial combat, the action soars and the game's potential is fully realized. Blasting into the sky after a full-on ground war, jacking alien vessels, and tracking down impossibly huge airships elevates the adventure to a peak that's exciting, powerful, and just plain fun. | Douglass C. Perry

Rating ★★★★☆



↗ Hijack an alien saucer, but don't shoot the Ark—it's full of animals!



↙ Developer Airtight does a good job of keeping you from feeling woozy when the camera flips during vertical combat.

Who's watching the Watchers?

At first, the game's primary villains, the Watchers, appear to be a band of evil sentient robots. Surprise! Instead, they're a highly advanced reptilian race that evolves over hundreds of years from a tiny slug to a giant salamander to a fully upright (cold and scaly) humanoid. In slug form, they control the robot sentinels (second tier combatants). In giant salamander form, they pilot massive mechanical bosses. And fully evolved, they speak in slithering tongues in councils and plot their invasion of Earth. Oh, to be a brilliant slug!

↑ Salem and Rios leave the frat house jokes at home and join the *Die Hard* party.

ARMY OF TWO: THE 40TH DAY

It takes two to tango

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: EA Montreal

During the entirety of *Army of Two: The 40th Day,* the city of Shanghai takes a 12-round beating. Skyscrapers explode into fragments, 747s smash into buildings, and thousands of civilians are slaughtered. It's all very exciting and violent. But the one question that kept running through our head was: Why does EA *hate* Shanghai so much?

↑ These absurd-looking hockey masks are smartly equipped with hi-tech gadgets.

In *40th Day,* developer EA Montreal took the basic foundation it created for the first *Army of Two* game—a focused co-op experience featuring two mercenaries—and expanded on it for the sequel. As returning characters Tyson Rios and Elliott Salem, you're two guns hired to stop a mysterious army from obliterating Shanghai in a two-player co-op romp. Much like the original, the story campaign offers co-op splitscreen or online play via PSN, or a solo experience with the AI.

The original game's single-player experience suffered from a poor setting (the Middle East in spring 2008 was still too sensitive a subject), frustratingly dumb team AI, and exasperatingly constrained co-op situations. In the sequel, EA Montreal delivers a rich, over-the-top buddy experience that provides intelligent choices and a tough but fun *Die Hard*-like vibe that helps lighten the game's dark, gritty atmosphere.

The new campaign gives you more freedom and better realized co-op situations, whether it's strategizing how to beat a tough grenade-wielding boss or escaping from a makeshift prison. There are also new "morality moments" that present you with compelling ethical dilemmas. Should you free the beaten woman or the shady but helpful Russian merc? Each situation triggers a debate with your partner (or conscience), and a stylistic cutscene reveals the outcome of your decision.

Meanwhile, Shanghai is being blown to bits all around you, a disorienting factor that adds a sense of chaos to the proceedings. You'll tear through a crumbling skyscraper, explore bomb-laden labyrinthine malls, and ramble through a surprise-laden zoo (using dead rhinos as cover objects), with destructive forces reshaping the landscape as you play.

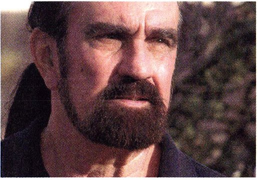
Not to be forgotten is the robust six-on-six multiplayer game. Packing a dozen or so tightly designed maps and explosive versus modes, it extends the excellent co-op experience well beyond the single-player game. Bad for Shanghai, good for us. | Douglass C. Perry

Rating ★★★★½

↖ No free lunch

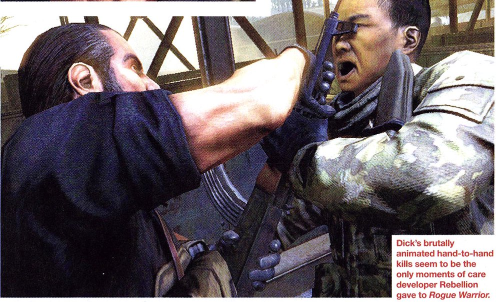
You'll encounter funny, dark ethical dilemmas in *The 40th Day* called "morality moments." Our favorite takes place in a zoo. You have to decide whether to kill or save a Siberian tiger. [Spoiler ahead.] Save it, and a cutscene reveals the tiger killing an innocent civilian. Kill it, and you doom the breed to extinction.

↗ In these occasional situational team-ups, you'll genuinely watch your buddy's back.



↙ The real Dick Marcinko

BORN: November 21, 1940
RANK: Commander (Navy)
SERVICE: 1958-1988
COMMANDED: SEAL Team 2, SEAL Team 6, Red Cell
AKA: Demo Dick; Shark Man of the Delta
MEDALS EARNED: Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Navy Commendation Medal (2), Bronze Star for Combat Valor (4)
**Former SEAL Marcinko has published more than 10 books, and has served as a consultant on* 24 *and* The Rock.

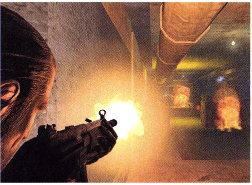


Dick's brutally animated hand-to-hand kills seem to be the only moments of care developer Rebellion gave to *Rogue Warrior.*

ROGUE WARRIOR

A hardnosed Cold War hero succumbs to last-gen gameplay

PS3 PRICE: $49.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks DEVELOPER: Rebellion



↑ *RW's* levels are packed with barrels, crates, and pipes exhibiting the Iron Curtain's prime commodity: rust.

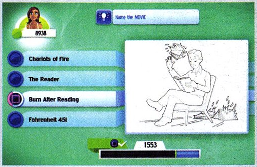
In three hours, with the help of America's most dangerous Navy SEAL, we've uttered more combined profanity than the entirety of the Los Angeles freeway system's apoplectic drivers. *Rogue Warrior* is full of swearing. Yours, and the main character's—Dick Marcinko, the real-life, one-man Cold War wrecking crew that the game's exaggerated, communism-foilin' missions are based around.

As you machine-gun your way through Korean warehouses and Soviet missile hiding places, Dick chimes in with lines like "I F-ing hate hedge mazes," and "Hi-oh, hi-oh, this F-er's gonna blow." Charming, right? But no amount of uncreative cussing can distract from the reality that *Rogue Warrior* is a last-gen game that didn't hit its original deadlines and has finally managed to find its way to retail.

The game's original ambition for four-player drop-in/drop-out co-op is replaced by a three-hour escapade of tapping X to execute easy stealth kills on aloof Korean and Russian soldiers. Non-existent physics, static lighting, and half-assed visual effects—like a hallway fire that resembles a flame-colored rug being dragged along the ceiling—do nothing to set an exciting scene for the action.

Mickey Rourke's weathered portrayal of Dick does produce a hint of B-movie charm, much like we might tolerate watching half of an '80s action movie like *Delta Force* on a Sunday afternoon. But none of this will ever be worth $50. If you're desperate for a game with a Navy SEAL in it, try *SOCOM II.* It's six years old, but looks better, has a higher framerate, and is more entertaining than *Rogue.* | Evan Lahti

Rating ★⯪☆☆☆



↑ The cartoon doesn't appear all at once; you have to guess as it's drawn in.

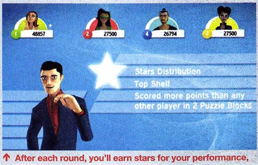
Scene It? Bright Lights! Big Screen!

Decent game! Too much punctuation!

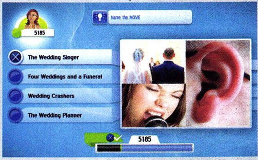
PS3 PRICE: $39.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Warner Bros./Screenlife DEVELOPER: Artificial Mind and Movement

There's absolutely nothing wrong with *Scene It's* first appearance on PS3 (along with its board-game origins, the movie trivia series spawned two prequels on Xbox 360), but it lacks that special star quality. In its favor are tons of user options—game length, turning the host's tepid chatter on or off, and how cutthroat or risky you want to be when it comes to points. Some of the categories are fun, especially Pixel Flix, which offers 8-bit animations of famous film scenes. But there's no online play (it's better in the same room, but still) and, even though it supports the *Buzz!* buzzers, it lacks that game's goofy charm. Rent it for a weekend and collect the easy Trophies, then get back to *Buzz!* | Brian Carnegie

Rating ★★★☆☆



↑ After each round, you'll earn stars for your performance, then wager them for more points.



↑ Wedding, Sing, Ear—get it? (Most aren't this dumb.)

We plunder **Uncharted 2: Among Thieves** for online gold

Martin Davies

The sequel to *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* doesn't need multiplayer. It's a guaranteed success without a single online feature. Yet Naughty Dog delivers here, and then some, with matchmaking, ranking, perks, varied competitive modes, co-op of three flavors and the ability to record each match and replay it, swooping through the carnage from any angle.

Elite loot

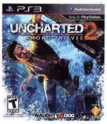
Naughty Dog doesn't do much that's revolutionary, but takes tried-and-tested concepts to polished heights. We've seen Capture the Flag variants before, and the endurance co-op mode, which has you wading through 10 waves of successively tougher AI bad-dudes, has popped up in *Resident Evil 5* among others. Even the ability to watch matches again in the cinema is an idea purloined from elsewhere—and why not, when Naughty Dog plunders with such panache?

King of the swingers

Uncharted 2 does bring distinct character to the combat. You're encouraged to clamber and leap all over the levels, setting a tone somewhere between tactical shooter and monkey house. But the level design goes some way beyond climbing frames—players battle each other to the backdrop of vertigo-inducing mountain vistas, crumbling temples wedged between glaciers, and shattered city squares.

Pause to admire the view and you'll likely pay the price. Death comes quickly in *Uncharted 2.* While you're able to suck up body shots, a bullet to the skull will floor you very quickly, so cover, blind-fire, and flanking become essential tools.

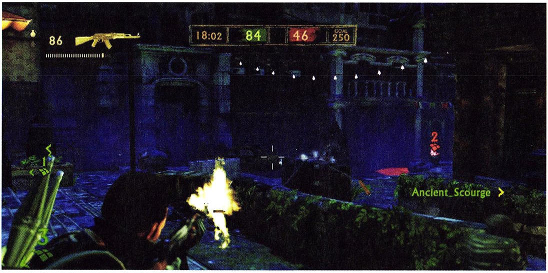
As you rank up, you can unlock and purchase "boosters." These give you significant advantages, such as greater accuracy when shooting from the hip or blind-firing. It's odd then, that the matchmaking system seems to throw people of high-rank and low-rank together with little obvious balance. It's also disappointing that the one truly ranked playlist (which takes into account your wins and losses to award you a separate rating next to your name) bundles together all of the gametypes. These minor quirks are likely to be ironed out with forthcoming DLC and playlist updates, but even as it stands, *Uncharted 2* is one of PS3's finest multiplayer treasures.



Pub SCEA
Dev Naughty Dog
Players 1 to 10
Rated 5 stars | PTOM Nov 09 issue

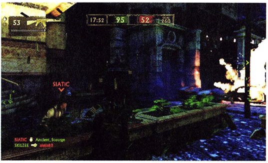
Uncharted 2 is the best-looking game on PS3 and, remarkably, better than the seminal original. It's spectacularly well-designed and most importantly, enormously entertaining. A landmark PS3 adventure.

Gameplay The match



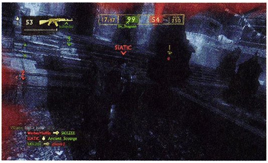
1 Reaction satisfaction

Our preferred objective mode is Chain Reaction, in which two teams battle to capture a number of control points in sequence. But we're outvoted: King of the Hill it is. This match sees us take on the role of the dastardly villains, applying our PMC jackboot to a nice quiet township. Drake will rue the day for meddling in our plans.



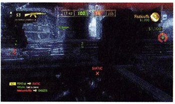
2 Note to self: short bursts

Drake, played here by SIATIC, manages to avoid our inept spray of bullets, and we both end up on opposite sides of a small hedge, which apparently prevents us from indulging in a melee with each other.



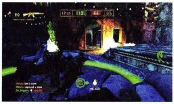
3 There's always a butt

After flailing at each other for a number of seconds, we realize that no damage is being done. PTOM takes the initiative, vaulting over the hedge and applying a gun butt to SIATIC's teeth. He doesn't like that.



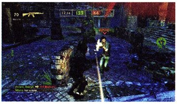
4 Getting in character

In a moment of moral weakness, we celebrate our victory in ungentlemanly fashion by doing a little dance over SIATIC's broken body. Sorry, SIATIC. We almost felt bad about that. But we are the villains, right?



5 Rock and a hard place

We make it across the bridge, but sprint straight into cover as a rogue grenade drops from above. We crouch and brace for impact. There's a Helghast-lookalike coming—good thing we have our M82 locked and loaded.



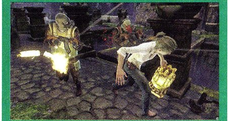
6 Karma police

Until SIATIC turns up, that is, and teaches us a harsh lesson for being so unsporting by splattering our head all over the market square. Ultimately, it's too late for the good guys to pull the match back. Cue evil guffaw.

The details

Modes

It's a toss-up



Plunder is your Capture the Flag variant, replacing the flag with a golden idol that can be hurled great distances. It makes for slightly abrupt rounds on smaller maps, unfortunately, and a well-organized team can wipe the floor with those lacking headsets. There's a similar gametype in co-op, fighting against AI, and a Survival mode to boot, but the real surprise is a "campaign-lite" co-op mode that sees three players take on story-driven missions together.

Top Tip

Rank up fast

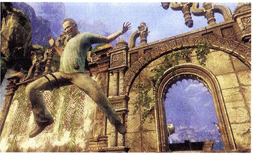
An excellent way to get a massive experience boost is to survive all 10 waves of AI bad-guys in one map of the Survivor co-op mode. It's far from a cinch, but the reward is suitably mammoth.

Features

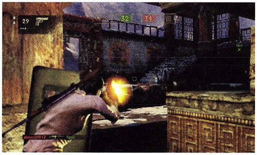
Watch and learn

The Cinema mode automatically saves the last three matches you played in their entirety. Every bullet and every move is recorded for you to play back at your leisure and take screenshots, adding tints, depth-of-field effects, wide-angle perspectives and other camera trickery. Amazingly no cinema file is more than 5MB in size.

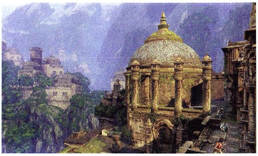
Intel *Uncharted 2* is special because...



The one thing that immediately sets *Uncharted 2* apart from other run-and-gun or tactical-shooter fare is the ability to climb all over the levels. Each is riddled with shortcuts and escape routes that the expert player can exploit.



Though the players' monkey-like abilities make for a fast-paced game, Naughty Dog has combined this with a smart head for tactics, making cover a real necessity. Good use of riot shields can turn matches around—but watch out for grenades.



Few games look so slick in multiplayer—Naughty Dog is right not to compromise this with splitscreen. While matches sometimes take a while to find players, the minor lag we've experienced is always well-disguised.

How to rule Survival mode

Where to hold out and how to stay alive

Our favorite mode in *Uncharted 2's* massive online offering is co-op Survival. It's addictive, different every time, and racks up perk-buying dollars. The setup is dead simple: there are four maps and on each one you and two friends must defeat 10 increasingly powerful waves of tooled-up enemies. Complete it and you'll get showered with rewards...

ENEMIES

Stealth

These sneaky black-suited fellas are extra quick and bolt forward to grab you and your teammates, leading to a blue knock-out count. Punching them's no good—you have to stay sharp and nail them on the way in. And if you're shooting them off one of your co-op mates, we recommend you be really, really careful.

ENEMIES

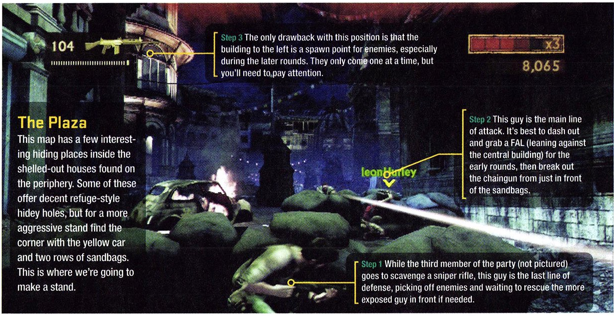
Snipers

Easy to pick up thanks to their less-than-stealthy red laser sights tracing across the level. They take their time firing off rounds, but when they do, especially on the later rounds, it's usually a one-hit takedown. Don't let them build in numbers—take them out as soon as possible and do lots of diving around.

ENEMIES

Shield carriers

Like tortoises, only wearing balaclavas and carrying machine guns. Don't try to melee them—a thwack from a shield turns your vision gray instantly. Instead, use a friend as bait while you circle around the back, or flatten them with some heavy fire and then show off your precision aiming with a tidy shot into their exposed bodies.



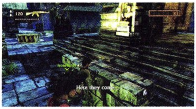
The Plaza

This map has a few interesting hiding places inside the shelled-out houses found on the periphery. Some of these offer decent refuge-style hidey holes, but for a more aggressive stand find the corner with the yellow car and two rows of sandbags. This is where we're going to make a stand.

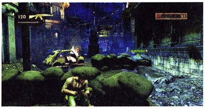
Step 1 While the third member of the party (not pictured) goes to scavenge a sniper rifle, this guy is the last line of defense, picking off enemies and waiting to rescue the more exposed guy in front if needed.

Step 2 This guy is the main line of attack. It's best to dash out and grab a FAL (leaning against the central building) for the early rounds, then break out the chaingun from just in front of the sandbags.

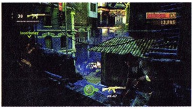
Step 3 The only drawback with this position is that the building to the left is a spawn point for enemies, especially during the later rounds. They only come one at a time, but you'll need to pay attention.



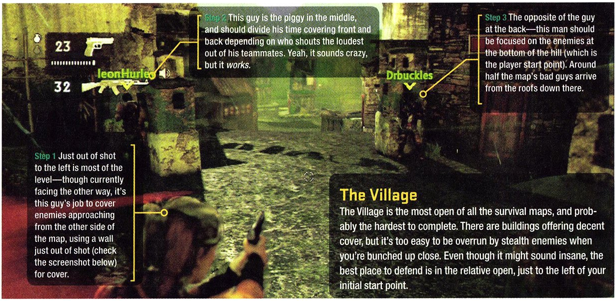
Grenade table Your spawn point is right next to a wall of grenades—make sure you grab as many as you can between each round.



Blow the car Before you get started, it's best to blow up the car. Otherwise your enemies will end up doing it for you at a less convenient time.



Fall back to house The cool thing about this alleyway is that there's a two-story house to enter when things get too frantic.



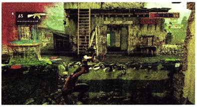
The Village

The Village is the most open of all the survival maps, and probably the hardest to complete. There are buildings offering decent cover, but it's too easy to be overrun by stealth enemies when you're bunched up close. Even though it might sound insane, the best place to defend is in the relative open, just to the left of your initial start point.

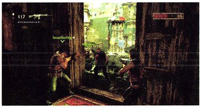
Step 1 Just out of shot to the left is most of the level—though currently facing the other way, it's this guy's job to cover enemies approaching from the other side of the map, using a wall just out of shot (check the screenshot below) for cover.

Step 2 This guy is the piggy in the middle, and should divide his time covering front and back depending on who shouts the loudest out of his teammates. Yeah, it sounds crazy, but it *works*.

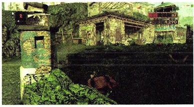
Step 3 The opposite of the guy at the back—this man should be focused on the enemies at the bottom of the hill (which is the player start point). Around half the map's bad guys arrive from the roofs down there.



Front position This is the cover position for the guy at the back, facing the rest of the level and blind-firing his way to delicious victory.



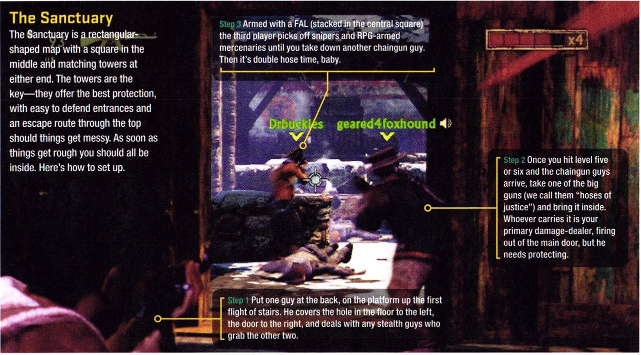
Fall back to house Just like The Plaza, there's a house just behind the player spawn point that can be used for emergencies.



Opposite view When things get really busy, the guy in the middle switches to lend support. It feels exposed but there's plenty of cover points.

The Sanctuary

The Sanctuary is a rectangular-shaped map with a square in the middle and matching towers at either end. The towers are the key—they offer the best protection, with easy to defend entrances and an escape route through the top should things get messy. As soon as things get rough you should all be inside. Here's how to set up.



Step 1 Put one guy at the back, on the platform up the first flight of stairs. He covers the hole in the floor to the left, the door to the right, and deals with any stealth guys who grab the other two.

Step 2 Once you hit level five or six and the chaingun guys arrive, take one of the big guns (we call them "hoses of justice") and bring it inside. Whoever carries it is your primary damage-dealer, firing out of the main door, but he needs protecting.

Step 3 Armed with a FAL (stacked in the central square) the third player picks off snipers and RPG-armed mercenaries until you take down another chaingun guy. Then it's double hose time, baby.

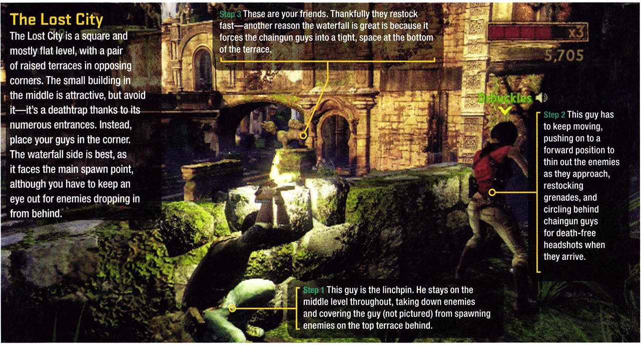
Forward position In the earlier rounds before things really get dangerous you can push out to the walls in front of the tower and take down the mercs.

High Position The guy at the back of the tower protecting the others can head up one more flight of stairs to a bridge overlooking the level.

Holding the hose A shot of the double-hose in action. When you've got more than one on the go, it's crucial not to get in each other's way.

The Lost City

The Lost City is a square and mostly flat level, with a pair of raised terraces in opposing corners. The small building in the middle is attractive, but avoid it—it's a deathtrap thanks to its numerous entrances. Instead, place your guys in the corner. The waterfall side is best, as it faces the main spawn point, although you have to keep an eye out for enemies dropping in from behind.



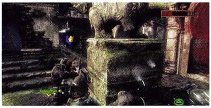
Step 1 This guy is the linchpin. He stays on the middle level throughout, taking down enemies and covering the guy (not pictured) from spawning enemies on the top terrace behind.

Step 2 This guy has to keep moving, pushing on to a forward position to thin out the enemies as they approach, restocking grenades, and circling behind chaingun guys for death-free headshots when they arrive.

Step 3 These are your friends. Thankfully they restock fast—another reason the waterfall is great is because it forces the chaingun guys into a tight, space at the bottom of the terrace.

Forward position One of the two on the middle terrace should push forward to this block at the start of every round. It's perfect because…

Forward position close-up …from it you can see the main spawn position of the enemies—a sheer drop just past those sets of blocks ahead.



Danger Be careful you don't stay there too long, though. When separated from your teammates you're vulnerable to takedowns and stealth attacks.

ENEMIES

Heavy armor

Like, *really* heavy armor. Heavy enough to walk through an RPG blast without pausing to dust themselves down. These guys can take an unholy amount of straight-on damage. You're more likely to run out of ammo than down them with body shots. The only sensible way is to aim for the head.

ENEMIES

Chaingun carriers

The biggies. At first a single hose-bearing monster seems like an unstoppable force, but soon you'll be taking down three or four at once. Explosions—from grenades and RPGs—do work, but take ages and you run the risk of blowing yourself up. Instead, go for headshots. FAL and sniper are the best weapons from a distance.

General tips

Always revive your teammates from stealth attacks or injury immediately. Don't pick off the crowd that nailed them—get them up, and then get out. Start shooting and you'll run out of time and health.

When a friend is grabbed by a stealth attacker and you're too far away to melee the little bugger off, feel free to shoot them down instead but do it *very* carefully. In other words—not with the hose.

Each round of Survival will eventually end after a set time so if your friends are dead and you're horribly outnumbered don't give up—just run and hide.

Keep the team score multiplier (in the top right of the screen) as high as possible by picking up treasures dropped by enemies you've killed in special ways.

Use the quick grenade throw (L2) *all the time.* Aiming properly takes ages. A hastily chucked 'nade can take out whole groups of pursuers.

Dominate online Deathmatches

Gather some cash through co-op adventuring, then get into the real warzone...

THE ICE CAVE

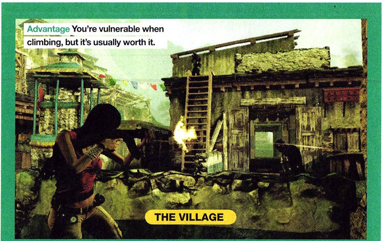
Overview
Two main layers make up the cave—a central path leading from one side to the other and a deadly underground catacomb—with a couple of elevated positions good for sniping and headshots. Avoid messy grenade fights down below, and keep the high ground.

Do
- Keep stocked up on grenades, and throw any spares into the underground pass as you go through the entrance.
- Make the most of the elevated tunnel on one side of the map with a scoped rifle.
- Listen carefully for grenades—it's a small map and they're often thrown at random.

Don't
- Get stuck on the ledges when dropping into the underground section—instant fail.
- Stand still. Fights are frantic on this pokey map—stay involved and stay on top.

Key weapon
The hammer is in the middle of the map underground—matches usually begin with a mad dash for it. The winner is guaranteed a few kills picking off slower opponents.

One-two Don't hammer the melee button. Get one hit in, then pull back and shoot.



Advantage You're vulnerable when climbing, but it's usually worth it.

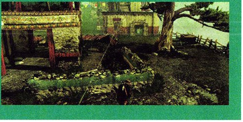
THE VILLAGE

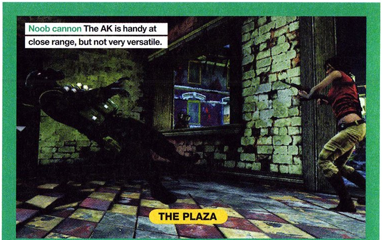
Overview
A flat, sloped map with plenty of buildings and low walls. It's also used in co-op, but the houses and roofs come into play much more in Deathmatch—it's all about sticking together, spotting enemies early, and taking them down from range.

Do
- Use the cover of the low walls and doorways in and around the central area of the map.
- Grab a shotgun and sneak through the many buildings waiting for victims.
- Ditch the AK for a FAL or M4 at your first chance—range and headshots are key.

Don't
- Pick up those gas tanks unless you're completely sure no one's got a bead on you.
- Run into the open at any time.

Key weapon
The snipers are on the two opposite roofs next to the cliff. Make sure your team grabs them both, and supports the ground troops.





Noob cannon The AK is handy at close range, but not very versatile.

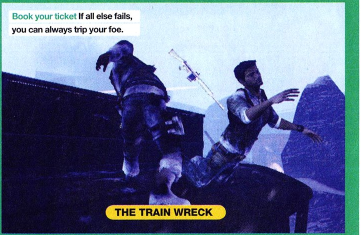
THE PLAZA

Overview
Big open spaces broken up with a scattering of wall cover, some potentially deadly vehicles, and lots of places to hide in the surrounding buildings. Strangers and the inexperienced will drift all over—a well coordinated team can really clean up the place.

Do
- Use blindfire—it's deadly and effective with all the low walls and open spaces.
- Set up a perimeter in one of the houses with your team.
- Stick to the outside of the map and fire at those moving around the center.

Don't
- Stand close to any of the abandoned vehicles.
- Spend a long time in the ditch in the middle of the map.

Key weapon
The hammer and the sniper are lying on opposite edges of the central square, but boring as it might sound, the FAL is your best bet.



Book your ticket If all else fails, you can always trip your foe.

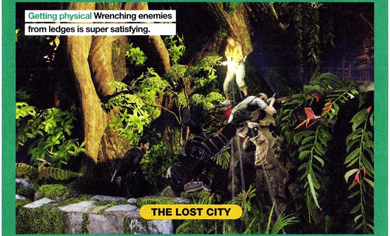
THE TRAIN WRECK

Overview
The Train Wreck is the scene of the carnage waiting for Drake at the top of that opening train carriage climb in the single-player campaign. It's small, but full of overturned train cars that offer loads of excellent vantage points and hiding places, especially useful thanks to all the visibility-reducing snow and fog.

Do
- Use the train carriage that forms a bridge over the main wreckage. It's an excellent high spot.
- Throw grenades into the carriages whenever you spot movement—they're absoluely lethal in the enclosed spaces.
- Use the fog—hang from ledges and creep through the snow using stealth melee attacks.

Don't
- Spend too much time at ground level. Enemies will pick you off from the train roofs.
- Forget to check behind you every few seconds. It's easy to be crept up on here.

Key weapon
Grenades. They respawn on crates around the center of the map—always pick them up when you have a chance, but don't hog them.



Getting physical Wrenching enemies from ledges is super satisfying.

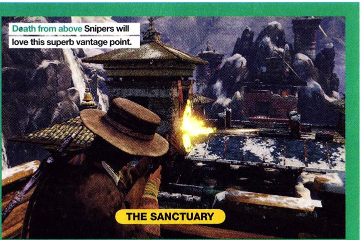
THE LOST CITY

Overview
The Lost City has a central area and two smaller walled-off areas on either side. The action mostly takes place in the middle and along the walkways of the diving walls. There's a building right at the center too—it looks tempting, but gets really messy.

Do
- Take a sniper up to the raised terraces in opposite corners of the central area. Make sure you get a friend to cover your back.
- Use ranged rifles with decent aim like the FAL. It respawns inside the central building.
- Check ledges for hanging enemies—it's easy to get pulled over the side. If you're the one to get the first hit in, he'll go flying.

Don't
- Go anywhere near the central building unless you're making a dash for ammo.
- Waste your time in the central underpass or on the edges of the map—the action's in the middle.

Key weapon
The sniper is found by the terrace in the corner of the central zone by the waterfall. It's a handy vantage point too.



Death from above Snipers will love this superb vantage point.

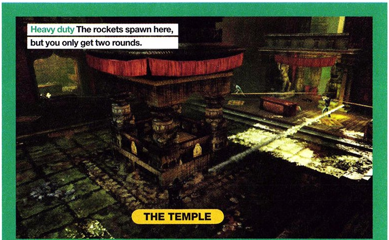
THE SANCTUARY

Overview
Our favorite co-op survival map. In Deathmatch it becomes a really enjoyable, but tough to master, killing shop. There's no obvious place to make a stand—it's full of platforms and roofs to shoot from, but they're all vulnerable to attack in one form or another.

Do
- Grab a shotgun if you're planning on staying in either of the towers or underground.
- Make the most of the highest platforms on the towers—they give awesome views of the whole level.
- Make sure someone's watching your back the whole time—nearly every spot on this map has two entrances.

Don't
- Try to persevere with the AK-47—the range is weak and the level demands something more accurate.
- Run through the central square out of cover, or you'll get ruined.

Key weapon
The shotgun, in the room above the square, is a must if you're planning on keeping to the shadows—but a sniper up high can dominate.



Heavy duty The rockets spawn here, but you only get two rounds.

THE TEMPLE

Overview
An interior map with a few long corridors and two large rooms. The bigger one of these houses most of the action—it has four entrances, a square stand in the middle, and raised balconies on either side. Don't get caught in the crossfire.

Do
- Use the raised platforms to shoot hot lead death on your enemies below.
- Stick together like glue—stragglers are mercilessly cut down in the long corridors.
- Use quick throw grenades to clear out corridors before you even move through them. Sneaky.

Don't
- Run around corners without checking—there's usually an explosion or scoped rifle waiting.
- Let the opposing team dominate the balconies in the central room, or you're in trouble.

Key weapon
Rifles are the order of the day, but the RPG is predictably handy.

ReTrophies: PSone Edition

Think you've mastered the oldies, do ya? Not until you've earned these official PTOM Trophies

Trophies are either the best or the worst thing to happen to modern gaming. But those of us who fall in the former camp lament the lack of Trophies in older games on a daily basis. (Where are the *MGS4* Trophies? *Where?!)* While PTOM can't magically enable Trophy support for your PSone, PS2, and PSP games, we can challenge your skills, test your knowledge, and help you extract the maximum potential from your old games with these Officially Unofficial Trophies. True, they won't show up with the rest of your accomplishments, but you can feel proud knowing you did something awesome to secure them. First up: PSone—can you earn 'em all? | Mikel Reparaz

DON'T HAVE THESE GAMES? Download 'em cheap from the PlayStation Store.

Final Fantasy VII

☐ **Ultimate Summon** (Bronze)
Find the Knights of the Round materia by traveling to Round Island via Gold Chocobo.

☐ **Ride, Pimped** (Silver)
Breed a Gold Chocobo.

☐ **Under the Sea** (Silver)
Pilot a submarine to find and defeat Emerald Weapon.

☐ **Above the Sands** (Silver)
Fly low over the Corel Desert to find and defeat Ruby Weapon.

☐ **Ladies Man** (Gold)
Complete the Golden Saucer date scenario once each with Aerith, Tifa, Yuffie, and Barrett.

Tomb Raider

☐ **Dinosaur Hunter** (Bronze)
Defeat the velociraptors and the T-Rex in the Lost Valley without taking any damage.

☐ **Doppelganger** (Bronze)
Defeat Lara's skinless double in Atlantis without firing a single shot.

☐ **Treasure Hunter** (Silver)
Discover all the secret areas in the game.

☐ **Two-Fisted Archaeologist** (Silver)
Complete the game using only Lara's pistols.

☐ **Suicide Run** (Gold)
Complete the game without using a single health pack.

Twisted Metal 2

☐ **Hellfire** (Bronze)
After unlocking him, finish the game as the mid-boss Minion.

☐ **Missing Mascot** (Bronze)
After unlocking him, finish the game as Sweet Tooth.

☐ **I-Fall Tower** (Silver)
Demolish the Eiffel Tower by sticking a remote bomb to its support pillars.

☐ **Impossibly Huge** (Silver)
Defeat Dark Tooth without using any cheats, including weapon-triggering "special move" cheats.

☐ **Duelist** (Gold)
Demolish a friend in a two-player match using only your vehicle's machine guns.

Castlevania: Symphony of the Night

☐ **Flawless Richtery** (Bronze)
Defeat Dracula in the game's intro without having to be saved by Maria.

☐ **Pierce the Veil** (Silver)
Wear the glasses Maria Renard gives you during the fight with Richter Belmont, thereby saving his life and opening up the second half of the castle.

☐ **Vampire Killer** (Silver)
Finish the game as Richter after beating the game and starting a new file under the name "RICHTER."

☐ **Master Summoner** (Gold)
Raise all five familiars to level 99.

☐ **200.6%** (Gold)
Fully explore every part of Dracula's castle.

Silent Hill

☐ **Dead in a Ditch** (Bronze)
Ignore Dr. Kaufmann's optional side-quest and kill Cybil to earn the game's worst ending.

☐ **Completist** (Bronze)
Finish the Kaufmann side-quest by exploring Annie's Bar, Indian Runner, and Kaufmann's motel room.

☐ **Kill the Parasite** (Silver)
Save Cybil during the fight at the Lakeside Amusement Park by dousing her with the red liquid obtained at Alchemilla Hospital.

☐ **Abductee** (Silver)
After beating the game at least once with a Good+ ending and starting a "New Fear" game, find the Channeling Stone at the convenience store and use it to trigger the UFO ending.

☐ **Extreme Restraint** (Gold)
Beat the game using no guns other than the pistol.

Medal of Honor: Underground

☐ **Infiltrator** (Bronze)
Make it through a spy mission without being discovered.

☐ **Secret Army** (Bronze)
Unlock all 23 secret multiplayer characters by playing through the story missions.

☐ **Hand Cannon** (Silver)
In two-player mode, win five consecutive matches using only the pistol.

☐ **Wewelsburg 3D** (Silver)
Survive the Dark Camelot level using only the crossbow.

☐ **I, Panzerknacker** (Gold)
Unlock the bonus missions and then build your own "Panzerknacker" nutcracker robot and help it survive the final mission.

Suikoden

☐ **We're the Good Guys** (Bronze)
Spare the lives of all the recruitable generals after defeating them.

☐ **Patron of the Arts** (Bronze)
Find and deliver all the paints that Ivanov needs to complete his mural.

☐ **Schtolteheim Reinbach IV** (Silver)
Recruit all characters and complete all side-quests necessary to complete work on your castle.

☐ **Catch 'Em All** (Silver)
Recruit all 108 Stars of Destiny.

☐ **Happily Ever After** (Gold)
Finish the game after recruiting all 108 Stars and reviving Gremio.

Metal Gear Solid

☐ **Pants Off, Part 1** (Bronze)
As you're crawling through the vents to rescue the DARPA chief, take a moment to observe Meryl working out in her cell. Now leave and re-enter the vents two more times, peeking into her cell each time. On the third look, she'll be in her underwear.

☐ **Are You Psychic Too?** (Bronze)
Defeat Psycho Mantis by switching to the second controller port without prompting from Col. Campbell.

☐ **Pants Off, Part 2** (Silver)
After seeing through Meryl's disguise, follow her into the restroom and barge straight into the stall she's hiding in, surprising her in her underwear.

☐ **You Like Konami Games** (Silver)
Have saves for *Suikoden, Castlevania: Symphony of the Night,* and/or *Policenauts* on your Internal Memory Card when you face Psycho Mantis.

☐ **Infinite Ammo** (Gold)
Save Meryl's life by not submitting to Ocelot's torture.

Syphon Filter

☐ **Excessive Force** (Bronze)
Make an enemy burst into flames with the Taser.

☐ **Good Shepherd** (Bronze)
Finish the first mission with no CBDC casualties.

☐ **Anticlimax** (Silver)
Kill Erich Rhoemer with a single gas grenade.

☐ **One Shot, One Kill** (Silver)
Kill Pavel Kravitch with a single headshot.

☐ **Paci-Fist** (Gold)
Disarm Maria Aramov at the museum by sniping the pistol out of her hand.

Wipeout

☐ **Slow and Steady** (Bronze)
Complete the Venom Class circuit to unlock Rapier Class without cheating.

☐ **One Hand Tied Behind Your Back** (Bronze)
Place first on any track without using weapons.

☐ **Perfectionist** (Silver)
Complete at least one Rapier Class race without bumping into a single wall.

☐ **Grand Champion** (Silver)
Finish first on every track in both Venom and Rapier Classes.

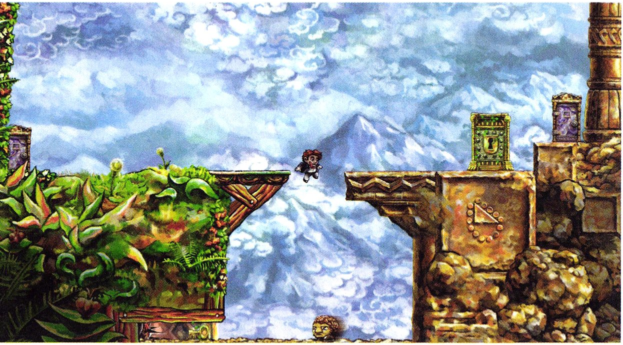
☐ **Angry Red Planet** (Gold)
Place first on the secret Firestar track after unlocking it.

PlayStation Network Games

Downloadable games and add-ons for less than the cost of a game-addiction therapy session

+ **YEA** Full value for your money.

– **NAY** No legs, no fun, no value.



Braid

PRICE: $14.99 **ESRB:** Everyone 10+ **PUBLISHER:** Hothead Games **DEVELOPER:** Number None

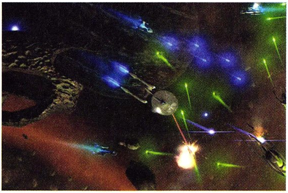
+ It was well worth the agonizing wait to see this 2008 indie hit finally make its way to the PS3. A simple and gorgeously designed platform puzzler on the surface, *Braid* sneakily uses unconventional mechanics and a warped series of plot twists to immediately get inside your head and dash away any preconceived notions you might have about what a game should entail.

The fancily dressed protagonist screwed up badly, and his beloved princess is taken away by an evil creature. Your memorable and challenging journey to get her back will ultimately raise more questions than it answers, but this is part of what makes *Braid* such a curious and compelling adventure.

Navigating the vibrant, hand-drawn platforming levels begins with basic running, jumping, and stomping. However, the real fun kicks in when you realize you can also mess around with the fabric of space and time to influence everything in your surroundings. The ability to rewind, fast-forward, and even slow down time at the tap of a button is only the beginning of your mysterious powers. New variations on this intriguing concept are layered on as you move deeper into the tragic and mind-bending tale, making *Braid* one of PSN's most worthwhile time sinks. | Nathan Meunier

Star Trek: D-A-C

PRICE: $9.99 **ESRB:** Everyone **PUBLISHER:** Paramount Digital Ent. **DEVELOPER:** Naked Sky Ent.



– J.J. Abrams' reboot of the *Star Trek* film series provides the impetus for this top-down shooter war between the Federation and the Romulan Empire. Piloting one of five classes of ships—like sluggish flagships armed with photon torpedoes or zippy fighters capable of weaving through laser fire—you'll head up fleet-to-fleet battles in a handful of starfield arenas.

The PS3 version adds in a meager solo survival mode where you'll blast through oncoming waves of enemy starships, but the focus still leans heavily toward online multiplayer matches. You'll find straightforward Team Deathmatches, an assault mode where factions alternate between attacking and defending a starbase, and a team-up conquest mode to capture key map points.

The straightforward arcade-style gameplay is fast-paced and satisfying, and slick weapon power-ups and the ability to jettison an escape pod for a last-ditch chance at survival are nice touches. But unfortunately, *D-A-C* is almost completely devoid of the unique *Star Trek* personality series fans have come to expect. Without this charm, the intergalactic grudge matches quickly wear thin. | Nathan Meunier

PSone Fun

Can't miss classics—now available on PSN

PlayStation
RESIDENT EVIL 2
CAPCOM

Resident Evil 2

PRICE: $5.99 **ESRB:** Mature

It's a zombie party in Raccoon City and you're invited. B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Brains)

PlayStation
COMMAND & CONQUER
Westwood

Command & Conquer

PRICE: $5.99 **ESRB:** Teen

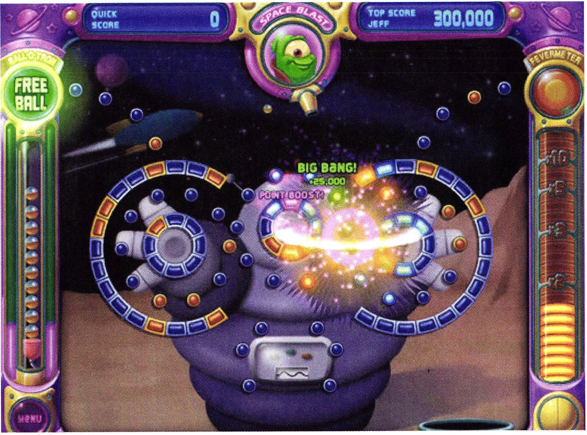
Pick a warring faction and charge into the fray to see where this classic RTS series began.

PlayStation
LEGACY of KAIN
SOUL REAVER
EIDOS

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

PRICE: $5.99 **ESRB:** Mature

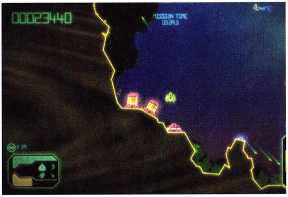
A plane-shifting vampire is the unlikely hero in this bloody battle against the forces of darkness.



Peggle

PRICE: $9.99 **ESRB:** Everyone
PUBLISHER: SOE **DEVELOPER:** PopCap Games

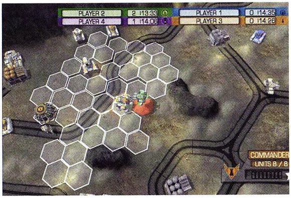
+ If you haven't heard of *Peggle* before, prepare to have it irreparably burned into your psyche. PopCap's notorious peg-busting puzzle shooter may be doused in rainbow-colored razzle-dazzle, but it's a workhorse when it comes to dishing out entertainment. Over 50 amazing levels of pachinko-style puzzles to obliterate with a bouncing metal ball should be enough to get you hooked with the *Peggle* fever. Once you've sucked out every last drop of awesomeness it has to offer, you'll want to shell out a few more bucks for the equally scintillating *Peggle Nights* add-on. | Nathan Meunier



Gravity Crash

PRICE: $9.99 **ESRB:** Everyone **PUBLISHER:** SCEA
DEVELOPER: Just Add Water

+ In a nod to classic arcade shooters like *Lunar Lander* and *Asteroids, Gravity Crash* unabashedly embraces a retro vibe. Piloting a robotic spacecraft on missions through neon-drenched worlds rife with vector graphics and splashy visual effects, you'll fight against gravity and alien military fortifications alike. Successfully collecting glowing crystals, saving stranded comrades, and blasting unfriendly space natives requires patience and precision.Tight solo and multiplayer action is bolstered by a beefy level editor that extends the fun. | Nathan Meunier



Military Madness: Nectaris

PRICE: $9.99 **ESRB:** Everyone **PUBLISHER:** Hudson Soft
DEVELOPER: Backbone Ent.

- Way back when it first appeared on the TurboGrafx-16, *Military Madness* was a sci-fi strategy game to reckon with. Twenty years later this 3D remake is still standing, but its legs are wobbly due to its severely limited and horribly dated formula when compared to current turn-based strategy games. You deploy a range of high-tech troops and vehicles across the hex-based grid and gang up on opponents in battle, but the inability to build out your infrastructure and create new units cripples the fun. | Nathan Meunier

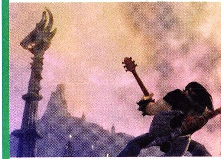
Play On

Must-have add-ons from the PlayStation Store

Borderlands: Zombie Island of Dr. Ned

PRICE: $9.99 **ESRB:** Mature

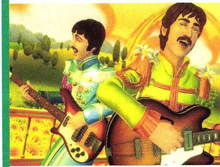
Venture into zombie-infested swamplands for goofy gunplay and undead shenanigans that'll satisfy your trigger finger while loading you up with even *more* loot.



Brütal Legend: Tears of the Hextadon

PRICE: $4.99 **ESRB:** Mature

Dig into two brutally slaytastic multiplayer maps and wield the mighty Blade of Ormagoden axe. So deliciously metal!



The Beatles Rock Band: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band

PRICE: $13.49 **ESRB:** Teen

Nab the rest of the tracks needed to be able to rock through the Beatle's eighth studio album in its entirety.

"You want to win? Turn me loose."

GAMER
AVAILABLE: January 19 (Download, Blu-ray, DVD)
GENRE: Sci-fi Action
STUDIO: Lionsgate

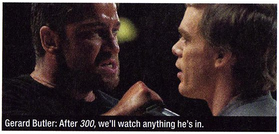
PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month

In the near future world of *Gamer*, the massively multiplayer videogame of the moment is *Slayers.* Think of it as a *MAG*- or *Modern Warfare*-style shooter where the players control real-life human beings (death-row inmates to be exact) within the game world. If the convict manages to survive 30 sessions, he is pardoned and released. Kable, played by Gerard Butler, is a wrongfully convicted inmate (of course) who is the first to approach the seemingly unattainable mission count. Will Kable survive and earn his freedom? Or more importantly, will the game's nefarious creator—Castle—*allow* him to win?

Why We're Watching

Directed by Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor, whose other notable works include the *Crank* films. *LA Weekly* wrote: "Their dystopia is inventive and their visual schemes diverse." We don't know what that means, but we're definitely using it in a future game review.



Gerard Butler: After *300*, we'll watch anything he's in.

Michael C. Hall: The star of Showtime's serial killer saga *Dexter* plays the evil games-industry mastermind. Yep, that's just about right.

The New York Times called it: "A futuristic vomitorium of bosoms and bullets." Um, that actually sounds pretty good to us.

It's a gaming-themed movie. If it's good, we'll be amazed by the film's keen societal insight. If it's bad, we'll indulge our slow-down-to-view-the-carnage voyeuristic tendencies. Either way, we're gamers too, so we're basically obligated to watch.

Top VDS Downloads

MOVIES
- *Terminator Salvation*
- *The Goods: Live Hard, Sell Hard*
- *Four Christmases*
- *Funny People*
- *Angels & Demons*

TV SHOWS
- *The Venture Bros.*
- *Metalocalypse*
- *Family Guy*
- *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*
- *Stargate Universe*

↑ "I probably wouldn't be saying this if our species weren't facing extinction, but... I've always loved you."

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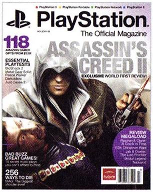
Letters

Feedback, Insight, Super Strategies, and Colon Therapy

> "I vote for the *AC II* subscriber's cover. It seems more elegant and classy." ↘



▲ This month's conversation starter

PlayStation 3
PlayStation Portable
PlayStation Network
PlayStation 2
PlayStation
HOLIDAY 09
The Official Magazine
I love the use of white space. It really opens up the page.

➔COVER RENAISSANCE

This is just a response to which cover for your Holiday 09 issue was better. I think everyone will agree that the subscriber's cover was much better. I really liked that it was different and exclusive to subscribers. (Because really, who doesn't like exclusive things?) Will you be doing this more often? I'm sure that all the subscribers to your magazine would like to get more covers like this one, and have it be different from the covers that are on the newsstands.

Peter Serna, via email

I vote for the *AC II* subscriber's cover. It seems more elegant and classy. The newsstand one seems a bit too busy. Both are good though. The subscriber just looks like a move toward "new."

Justin Mallit, San Diego, CA

The subscription cover is definitely better. The simplicity of the cover being all white with no headlines brings an elegance to the cover that matches the time period of *Assassin's Creed II*. I love seeing the design etched on the blade. It's really cool.

Stephano Lister, via email

Apparently newsstand readers don't care to chime in about the Holiday 09 covers, as subscriber cover emails outnumbered newsstands by about 50 to zero. Glad to hear that our subscribers appreciate our bit of exclusive PTOM love, and yes, we'll look for more opportunities to spice up subscriber covers in the future.

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT YOU

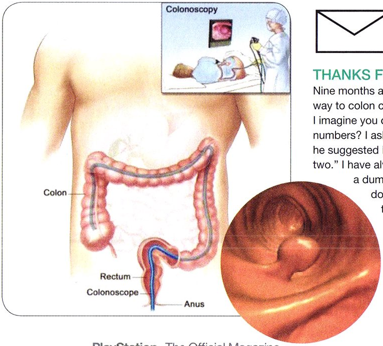
Cheers, job well done on providing the *Modern Warfare 2* multiplayer maps [December 09 issue] before the game came out, it was very helpful. Keep doing more of the same. But jeers for running the *Batman: Arkham Asylum* guide when everyone's already finished the game and moved on to playing *Uncharted 2*. Oh yeah, don't print that guide in your next issue either because everyone will be done playing that game too.

Rafael Martinez, via email

Thanks for the props, Rafael, but as for your jeers... Take it from us, not every one of our readers is on the same gameplaying schedule as you

Send your comments to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com. Because we believe in sharing…and being kind to animals. Well, at least the cute ones.

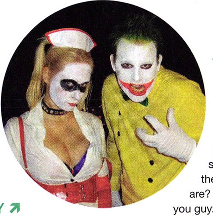
We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

THANKS FOR SHARING

Nine months ago my doctor told me I was on my way to colon cancer. I am currently 28 years old. I imagine you can all see the problem with those numbers? I asked the doctor what I could do, and he suggested I take my time when I "go number two." I have always been one to hurry up and take a dump, so I thought to myself… "What do I do?" Interestingly enough, around the same time, my wife surprised me with a subscription to PTOM, as I had just recently got my PS3. Without realizing it, I lost myself in all the great previews, reviews, dev team inside scoops and of course, reading the rants and raves of the PTOM crew. This and they appreciate a little post-purchase support from PTOM. And since you asked us not to…turn to page 82 and check out our *Uncharted 2* strategy. Ha.



GETTIN' LUCKY ↗

THANK YOU so much for publishing the mega guide to *Batman: Arkham Asylum*. My wife and I love that game! In fact, we love it so much we decided to dress up like the Joker and Harley for Halloween! I've attached a few pictures for your viewing pleasure. My wife commented to me, "Maybe we'll get lucky and they'll print one of our pictures in the next issue." Well, if you're up to it, you have our permission to use our photos. That would be one of the highlights of my year!

Jeremy Ball, Beaverton, OR

Well, we couldn't let Harley down now, could we? How *you* doin', Harley?

SPY GUYZE

Hey guys, I have a really cool idea! What if we could watch online matches live on the Internet. That would be *so* cool. Let's say that I am really excited for *Modern Warfare 2* but have to wait until Christmas, so I could go on my computer, or even iPhone/iPod Touch, and watch people, even my friends, play online from their perspective or third-person or a sky view. That would be really cool! But would it cause cheaters (for those really obsessive people) to be watching their game and be able to see where their enemies are? What are you guyzes thoughts on that. And yes I said Guyzes.

Alex van der Colff, via email

Well Alex, that's generally called stalking. But we do like the whole identifying-cheaters-and-humiliating-them angle. Good luck with your career in the CIA.

INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY

Look PTOM, I'm not going to cut any corners here. I respect you guys much like many other videogame magazines I read, and I understand that you're *PlayStation: The Official Magazine*. That being said, you guys really need to show some respect to Sony's competition. I understand you can't go on praising the Xbox 360's exclusives, but don't go on acting like their games are garbage. Too many times have I read the subtle remarks (and don't even try to deny it) made to mock the competition's latest exclusive, and then praise six months later when the game gets ported to the PS3 or PSP. So show some real pride and be more humble to the competition, please?

Nikki, via email

Okay, really, we get a few letters like yours every month, but none of them ever give *specific* examples from PTOM issues of what they're complaining about. Yes, we do make a few comments here and there, but generally we're very respectful of our fellow gamers who own the system that isn't as good as the PS3. So c'mon, at least present some evidence if you're going to prosecute us.

EVERYONE, FOLLOW THE BOUNCING BALL

In your November issue, you said: "Send your thoughts 'cause we can't be doin' all the givin' month after month," and it had me thinking… Why not create another section in Letters, but instead of having it be open, make it more of a guided discussion? Don't get me wrong, I love to read about people's cats peeing on their PS3's and all that, but I also like to see what people think about videogames and what really makes a good game.

Dylan Welch, via email

Okay, we'll give it a shot. This month's topic: our reviews. You play the games as much as we do: Are we right? Are we wrong? Do you agree with our observations and analysis? Believe it or not, we get far too few letters that dive into the nitty-gritty of our evaluations. C'mon, we can't be right all the time. Send your comments with the subject line "February Topic" to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com.

EXCLUSIVE

Is there any news about PlayStation 4 development?

Andrew Gaither, via email

No. But we've been playing the PS8 and it's awesome.

SO YOU'LL BUY THE NEW ONE

I want to know why developers stop putting out roster updates for the older versions? I have *Madden 08* and I recently bought *Madden 10* but they stop putting out updates when the new yearly release comes out.

Chase Ward, via email

A MAN WITH STANDARDS

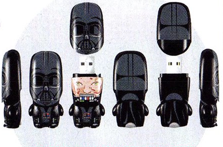
I am a subscriber to your magazine and just got the Holiday issue. I start in the back because I like to read the letters first. I noticed some questions about whether or not you read all the letters or not. Quite honestly, I don't really care because I just like your magazine. Keep up the good work.

Darrin Sardineer, Pittsburgh, PA

increased my "poo-poo clock" by at least an extra 15 minutes on average. I just got back from my colonoscopy and guess what?! The tissue damage has gone and I have a great looking colon! You might all say, "Hey man! That's gross" or "That's way more info than we needed" but do you know what I say to you all at PTOM? Thanks for writing a prescription even the doctor couldn't order!

Josh, via email

Dude, that's so gross—but also pretty funny and strangely heartwarming. Not only does PTOM reach out and touch the hearts and minds of our readers, we can dig even deeper and…um, actually nurse colons back to health. Sort of makes all the late night deadline sessions seem worthwhile… Thanks, Josh—we're probably going to be deluged by PTOM bathroom experience stories from here on in, but dammit, you're our Letter of the Month.



LOTM winner Josh will receive a Darth Vader 2GB USB Flash Memory Drive courtesy of Mimobot.com.

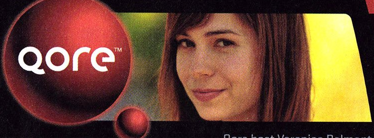
Cinema Giants

Our Holiday issue Reviews Intro page contest was a salute to *Brütal Legend*. Byron Barmby of Walnut Creek, Calif., correctly identified the rockers from three head-bangin' movies—some more bangin' than others.

"The first picture is bassist Derek Smalls (Harry Shearer), guitarist Nigel Tufnel (Christopher Guest), and lead singer David St. Hubbins (Michael McKean) of the band Spinal Tap from Rob Reiner's legendary mockumentary *This is Spinal Tap*. They know how to crank it up to 11 (which is one more louder than 10, if you didn't know) and if you've ever had your drummer spontaneously combust on stage (don't you hate it when that happens?), you may be able to relate to them and their mighty legend.

"The second picture is of Steve Buscemi, Adam Sandler, and Brendan Fraser from the movie *Airheads*. These guys probably turn it up to about 5 in this mildly funny, good-for-a-chuckle flick about a crappy band—The Lone Rangers—trying to get recognized, thus leading to the clearly logical decision to take over a radio station and hold the staff hostage. However, it was awesome that they loaded squirt guns with hot sauce, and I definitely got in trouble for squirting my brother with a Tabasco-filled water pistol.

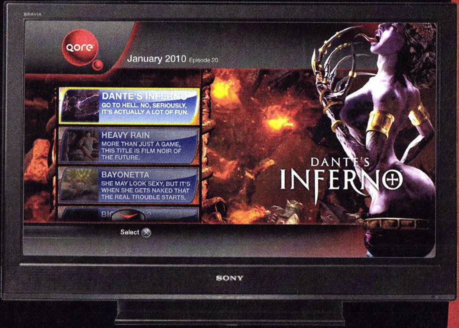
"The last picture is Rainn Wilson as Fish Fishman, a failure of a drummer who just so happens to be the star of a failure of a movie, *The Rocker*. Fish probably can't afford an amp, let alone crank it up to anything. Wilson's venture onto the silver screen was an ill-advised one, and he should really just go back to being Dwight on *The Office*—it's what he's good at."


qore™
Presented by the PlayStation Network

Qore host Veronica Belmont

QORE EPISODE 20

Featuring Dante's Inferno, Heavy Rain, Bayonetta, and BioShock 2


qore
January 2010 Episode 20
DANTE'S INFERNO
GO TO HELL. NO, SERIOUSLY, IT'S ACTUALLY A LOT OF FUN.
HEAVY RAIN
MORE THAN JUST A GAME, THIS TITLE IS FILM NOIR OF THE FUTURE.
BAYONETTA
SHE MAY LOOK SEXY, BUT IT'S WHEN SHE GETS NAKED THAT THE REAL TROUBLE STARTS.
DANTE'S INFERNO
Select
SONY

Hope you all had a great holiday season! If you didn't get the gifts you wanted, don't fret: the January issue of Qore has got the goods. This month we travel from Heaven to Hell to the bottom of the deep blue sea to bring you news on some of our favorite upcoming games. Enjoy!

Here's what's new in the January episode:

Qore is available for purchase from the PlayStation Network for $2.99 an episode, or $24.99 for a 13-episode subscription. Subscribers have access to betas, demos, themes and additional downloadable content each month.

AVAILABLE NOW!
Download on the PlayStation™ Network.

FEATURING

Gone to Hell

Are you a crusader for good, or a cold-hearted hellion bent on dooming the souls of your foes? In *Dante's Inferno*, you travel into Lucifer's lair to save the one you love, while making some questionable decisions along the way. Plus, we put you, along with the developers at Visceral Games, to the "evil test."

Heavy Loaded

Is it a game? A movie? We're still not entirely sure how to categorize *Heavy Rain*, but the dark and mysterious film noir-style of gameplay designed by French developer Quantic Dream is sure to make you want to unravel this net of intrigue. Come see for yourself in our in-depth interactive preview.

Getting Up Close & Personal

Bayonetta made a big splash at last year's E3 for its "showy" art style and insane fighting moves. We have a feeling that Sega's new dark diva could become one of the postergirls of video gaming. Plus, she has guns in her boots! How cool is that?

Shocking Sequel

BioShock 2 is one of the most anticpated sequels of the year, and we definitely have our fair share of questions for the developers at 2K Marin. Particularly, "Who is Big Sister, and why does she want to kill me?!"

Photograph by Mark Madeo

DYNASTY WARRIORS® Strikeforce

STAND UP AND FIGHT.

Back with a vengeance, and for the first time with 4-player online team combat! Strike down massive enemies from above and crush your foes with a blinding fury in over 200 of the most intense heart-pounding, button-mashing multiplayer quests.

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PS3 PlayStation®3 PlayStation®Network XBOX 360® XBOX LIVE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

FEBRUARY 2010 WWW.KOEI.COM/STRIKEFORCE

Produced by Omega-Force

TECMO KOEI AMERICA CORP.

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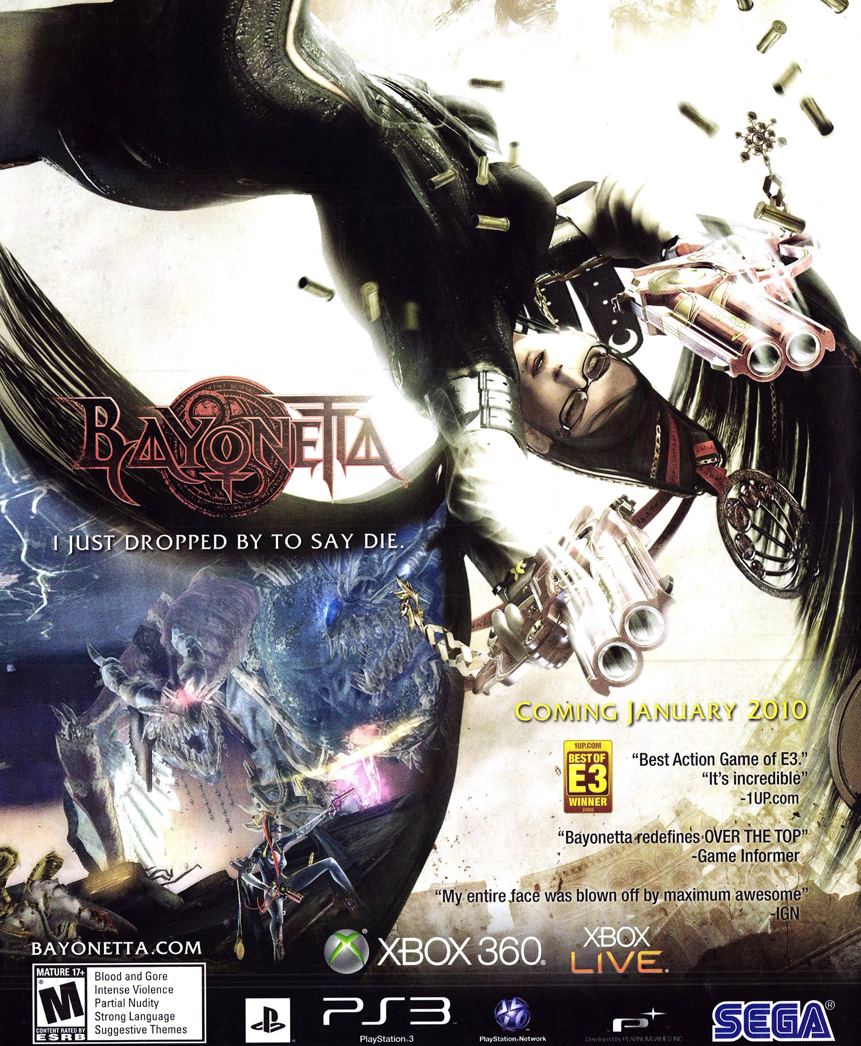

BAYONETTA
I JUST DROPPED BY TO SAY DIE.
1UP.COM
BEST OF
E3
WINNER
2009
XBOX 360
XBOX LIVE
PlayStation 3
PlayStation Network
Developed by PLATINUMGAMES INC.
SEGA

COMING JANUARY 2010

"Best Action Game of E3."
"It's incredible"
-1UP.com

"Bayonetta redefines OVER THE TOP"
-Game Informer

"My entire face was blown off by maximum awesome"
-IGN

BAYONETTA.COM

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- Blood and Gore
- Intense Violence
- Partial Nudity
- Strong Language
- Suggestive Themes

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